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COMMUNITY

Not Just A Buzzword,
But **A New World For Events.**



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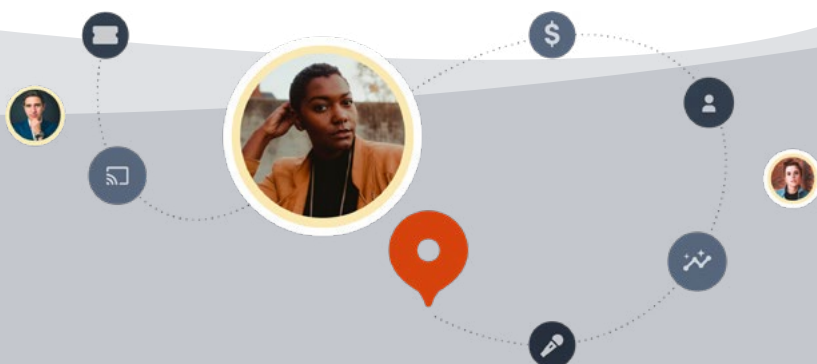
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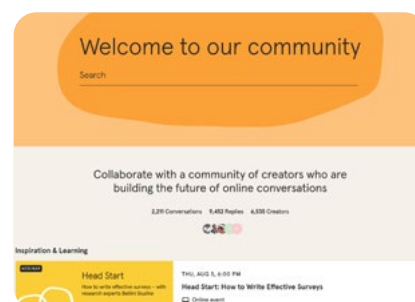
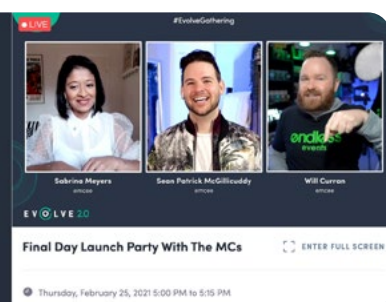
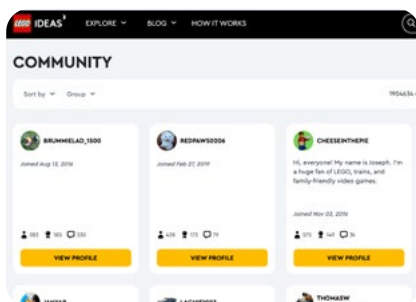
About this Report

Events in 2021 are starting to extend their life cycles beyond a few days. **Gone are the times where you'd see someone once a year and never talk in between events.** Always missing those connections and wishing you could keep that energy and excitement going.

Event planners are thinking like media companies and moving towards a community model - **one where attendees can interact all year round.**

And it's changing the events industry for the better by offering attendees a **unique value proposition.** To not only keep the momentum of their event going, but to grow it.

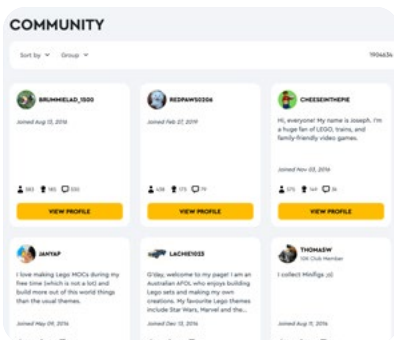
In a year where most people have been working from home and feeling isolated from their friends and neighbors, virtual communities have stepped up to help fill that void. It's not the same as grabbing a coffee or shaking hands, but online networking, sharing and exchanging have allowed people to feel connected, even when miles apart.



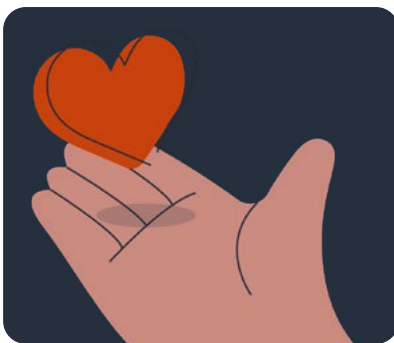
What is a community model?

Starbucks, PlayStation, Peloton, Harley-Davidson, Lego, Oracle. What do all these brands have in common? **Strong, global, engaged online communities** ranging from a few thousand to millions of members.

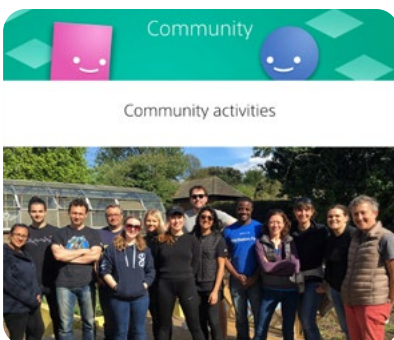
Event brands can create communities by transforming their event into a 365-day experience. Planners need to start immersing attendees in a branded online world where they can get their fix of networking, new content, human connection and news at the click of a button, any day of the year.



Recent research conducted by Swapcard among 461 virtual events shows that **the pre- and post-event periods are golden opportunities for networking**, and that very little business is closed during virtual events in comparison. **Data shows that, on average, over 90% of leads are generated in the pre-event period, compared to as little as 6% during the event.**



Statistics also show that inbound messages and requests from attendees to exhibitors peak after a live trade show, meaning that **more than 50% of crucial business opportunities fall into their laps once the event is over.**



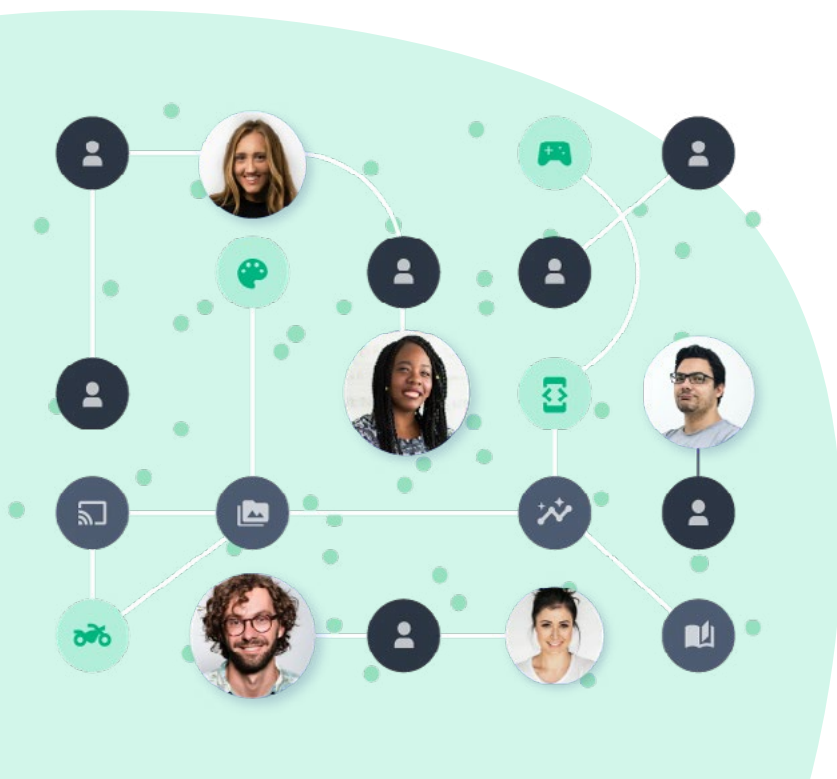
These statistics support the argument that **an event's lifecycle needs to be extended beyond a few days**. Engagement happens before and after the event, and can therefore happen all year long.

6 Reasons Community is 2021's Top Event Trend

1. AI DELIVERS INCREASINGLY PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES:

When it comes to elevating your members' and attendees' experiences to the next level, **you'll want an all-in-one platform powered by artificial intelligence.** A true AI tool, like the one used by Swapcard, has the ability to create an immersive and tailored user experience that can't be matched. Thanks to its advanced algorithm and the fact that it is constantly learning the more that it's used, AI has the ability to suggest more accurate and relevant recommendations.

Your community can benefit from a highly personalized journey from day one, right up until the yearly event. Their profile data will become more sophisticated with every passing week spent browsing and networking on the platform. Once event day arrives, your community will already be matched with the perfect people and make connections that turn into lasting business relationships. All of this is possible thanks to your platform's smart AI, with little to no effort on your part.



6 Reasons Community is 2021's Top Event Trend

2. COMMUNITIES INCREASE ROI POTENTIAL... EXPONENTIALLY:

Pricing attendance properly can be a bit of a tricky undertaking.

The first step is to stop thinking of it as "attendance" and start thinking of it as "membership." Once you rethink your approach, consider implementing a tiered subscription model that has options for every type of member's needs.

Take a step back and ask your community what they hope to get out of being involved. Some will only want content, while others are there to network. Exhibiting brands will be there to generate leads and increase brand awareness. **Create a pricing structure that allows for different levels of access, from free to VIP, and monetize your content and networking.**

Exhibitors will pay more if they gain more, and with the global reach your community can have, your event's ROI has the potential to be limitless.

Here's a list of the business outcomes that are improved by community models:



Customer Loyalty



Product usage



Lower support costs



Quality improvement



Awareness and branding



Innovation



Product improvements



Revenue growth



Communications efficiency



Productivity and efficiency

6 Reasons Community is 2021's Top Event Trend

3. OWN YOUR COMMUNITY

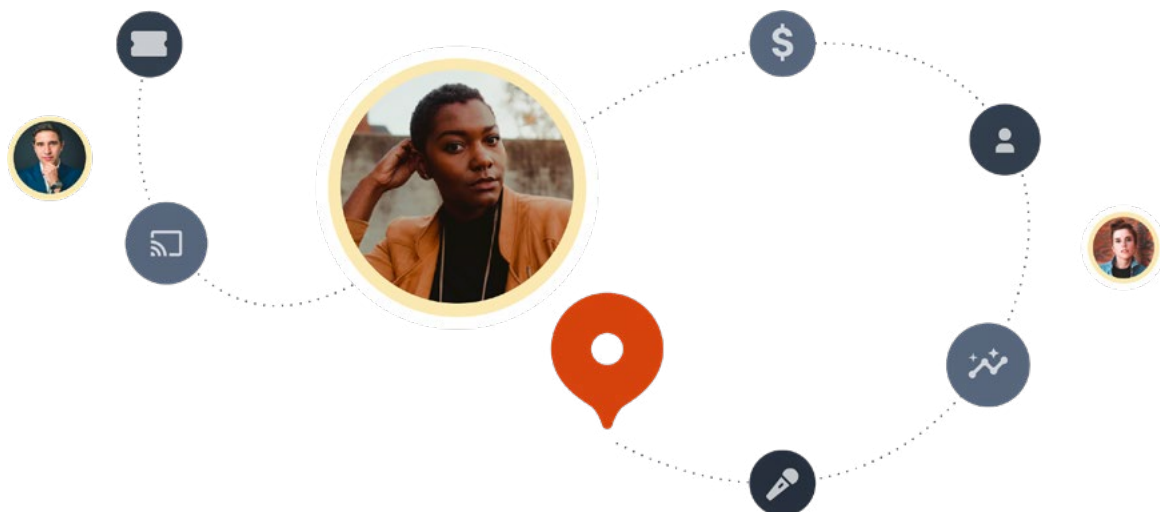
You'll need an all-in-one technology platform to serve as both the year-round community app, and the annual event platform. **Keeping your community in the same app is crucial because it stops your community from becoming diluted.** Once they disperse and move on to different social networks, you've lost a prime opportunity to control the message and be the center of your community.

Therefore, your event platform needs to be versatile – social feed, news updates, notifications, live streaming, profile customization, AI-powered networking, and a virtual marketplace are all features that are going to be indispensable to your community.

4. DATA AVAILABILITY WITH MULTIPLE TOUCH POINTS

The number of touch points you achieve with a community that interacts online 365 days a year is light years away from what you once had at a 2-day in-person event. **All those touch points on the community platform provide extremely valuable data on what each member likes, what they respond to, and guides you in your marketing investments.**

Data can teach us how to improve the experience for every individual and how to create a tailored event experience for the attendee. This kind of reward is unparalleled.



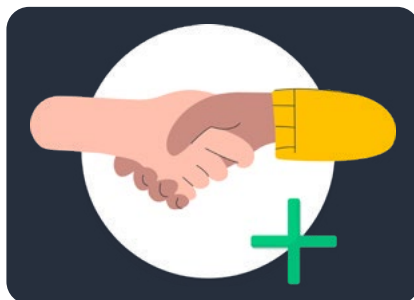
6 Reasons Community is 2021's Top Event Trend

5. INFINITELY MORE MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

A poster ad at an in-person event may have substantial effects on brand awareness, but it's virtually impossible to determine. But when brands advertise on a virtual platform, nothing is simpler than tracking the marketing ROI.

And with a year-round community, the **opportunities for marketing increase tenfold**.

Monthly newsletters, social feeds, webinars, workshops, online roundtables, and networking sessions are just a few of the countless moments throughout the year where ads can be displayed over and above the event days.



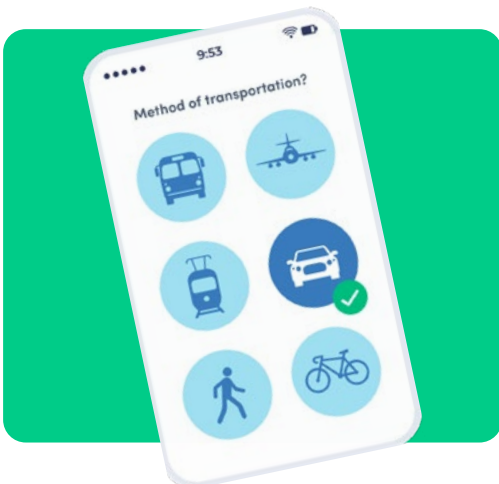
6 Reasons Community is 2021's Top Event Trend

6. COMMUNITY INCREASES REACH & ACCESSIBILITY

Since the event industry's digital revolution was spurred on by COVID-19, events have become more accessible than ever before. By abolishing physical borders and making travel restrictions non-existent, more people can attend. An online community is accessible to anyone who has a smartphone or computer and an internet connection. Geographical borders are removed and the community is inclusive to both differently-abled members as well as those who do not have the freedom or ability to travel.

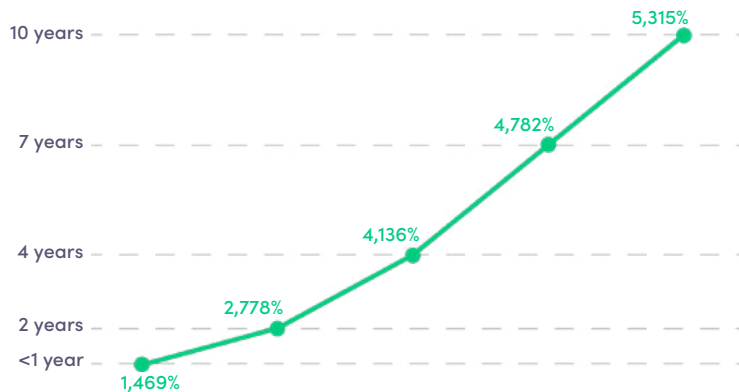


Not only will your brand be more accessible, but your reach will grow enormously. Growing a community year-round will deliver a more diverse, global audience to your speakers and exhibitors, increasing ROI for everyone.



The future of the event industry is moving towards a 365-day community model with up to 80% of year-round interactions taking place online and the other 20% taking place in the annual event. Most interactions are moving online, but that will by no means diminish the value of in-person meetings. If anything, it'll render physical events more memorable and meaningful.

Key takeaways from the data:



Average community ROI goes up as communities age!

Communities are making a positive difference for brand and culture – **70% of communities positively impact culture and brand.**



Communities positively impact a wide range of business outcomes. Top 3 business outcomes of the average external community:



Did you know? Customers **spend 19% more** after joining a company's online community in comparison to third party sites like Facebook

COMMUNITIES

The Future of Events















Communities: The Future of Events

WHAT IT ENTAILS:

Communities provide ample opportunities to extend the lifespan of an event. They are the ideal place from which to inspire and recruit brand ambassadors, get ideas on how to shape your future events, foster a sense of connectedness that goes beyond your event days, and get excitement going for your upcoming events. How can they achieve this?

With a community model, you'll have **one central place that serves as a gathering point** for everyone and everything related to your event. It can include your:

-  Yearly or bi-annual in-person or hybrid event
-  Virtual gatherings
-  Online networking sessions
-  Monthly webinars
-  Weekly newsletters
-  News feed
-  Online marketplace
-  Social channels with threads and feeds
-  AI-powered networking matches
-  Video library with the whole year's content on-demand
-  Educational online workshops
-  Demos, product reviews and brand advertising

Communities: The Future of Events

Community platforms are made to be used like social media by your attendees, sponsors and exhibitors, and they become the golden thread that runs throughout all your events.

Providing members with a platform to give you feedback and to access support is a surefire way to build trust. A community model ensures **authentic, uncensored back-and-forth between brand and consumer** – the kind of interaction that inevitably leads to transparency and trust.

Once there is trust, you can rely on your community to co-create content for upcoming events, give you honest and constructive feedback, and become ambassadors for your brand.



Communities that are crushing it



Typeform

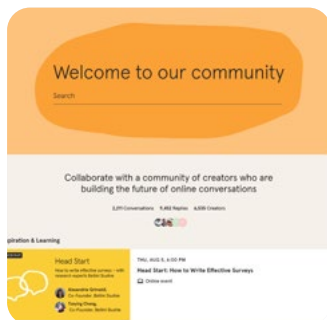
Nicholas Grenie

Developer Advocate at Typeform.com

Typeform was ahead of the game – **they embarked on a community trial in 2015 with a simple Slack channel for fans and followers.** They had sales and engineering employees constantly replying to messages, and it turned out to be very time-consuming. Eventually, the Slack community became a support channel instead of a place where community members could exchange best practices. So they shut it down.



Until recently, community.typeform.com launched a few months ago and is now the online forum, help center and community site for Typeform enthusiasts!



In their community, the Typeform team has rituals. Each week, they have two or three planned posts with regular topics for discussion. When we asked Nicholas about their strategy for engaging the community, he said that they simply provide content and remain present. From there, the community is automatically engaged through comments, reactions, reshares and threads.

Communities that are crushing it



Typeform

Nicholas Grenie

Developer Advocate at Typeform.com

Typeform's main goal with the community? Being more customer-centric and bringing people together who wouldn't otherwise meet. They gather valuable feedback for product improvements, and inspire community members to share ideas!

COMMUNITY TIP:

Nicholas **advises brands to hire someone to take care of the community.** It should not be an afterthought, left for when someone with another job has free time. A community requires a lot of attention and upkeep; without a dedicated employee or team, people get frustrated at not getting updates and not getting responses.

Typeform holds regular events and meet-ups for their community - mostly online, but hoping to meet in-person soon! Their online community gatherings attract around 2,000 members from 80 countries.

WHAT NOT TO DO:

Nicholas says not to have someone from your brand replying as if they were a bot. An absolute no-no is replying to messages in the community with a generic ***"Thank you for your request. Our team is working on it."*** response!

Communities that are crushing it

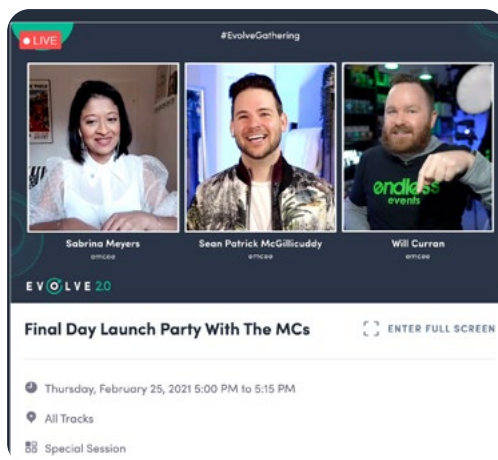


Evolve Community

Julien Bouvier

Event Strategist at Swapcard

Julien Bouvier, Event Strategist at Swapcard, sat down with us and shared his insights on the **Evolve Community**. The Evolve Community is made up of **13,000 global event professionals**, mostly from North America, Europe and the Middle East. Most members are event planners.



Everything started when the pandemic hit in 2020– Swapcard’s platform had to pivot and adapt to include features that were better suited for the virtual world. And what’s the best way to show event organizers that Swapcard’s platform can run virtual events? To organize one themselves and host it on their platform!

The first Evolve event was run back in May 2020. Seeing a need from the audience to connect with each other to share their doubts and experiences while reuniting in a judgement-free space. Swapcard soon realized how useful the digital world was to create and maintain a community.

When asking Julien what community does for the Evolve brand, Julien says that **their community is an incredible source of feedback and inspiration**. The goal at Swapcard has always been to develop products and services that would fit the industry needs. So they test out new products and features on the Evolve community and crowdsource ideas for improvement!

Communities that are crushing it



Evolve Community

Julien Bouvier

Event Strategist at Swapcard

It's also a playground for creative ideas that can later be recommended to clients of Swapcard – it's the perfect place to try new engagement, networking and content tactics.



New clients are also sourced directly from within the community simply by showcasing the Swapcard product in an authentic way. **Many community members join an event, love what they experience, and become clients!**



When it comes to switching to a community model, the main challenge was around the strategy itself – how do you transform your event model from 3 days to 365 days? **The answer is engagement.**



Engaging a community all year long is a challenge, but it's a matter of balance. You don't want to spam the members with too many engagement touch points. You also don't want to let them inactive for too long. **Julien considers a touch point something that brings the members back onto the platform.** This can be a new on-demand video, a roundtable, a push notification, a virtual event, a networking opportunity, and a lot more.

Communities that are crushing it



Evolve Community

Julien Bouvier

Event Strategist at Swapcard

You might be wondering if there have been ROI results from this new community model? Definitely! Julien shares that new members join the community every month and the business goals of gaining new clients and creating brand awareness are well achieved with this growing community.

He goes on to say that when we talk about ROI, the "return" is too often associated with cash. Sure, that's what pays our bills and wages at the end of the month. But that's not the main reason the Evolve team works countless hours on animating this community. It's really about helping the industry, especially the small and mid-size event organizations, to recover from this pandemic.

When it comes to ROI from Evolve, it also includes seeing the inspiring comments from their community members. To see their evolution from the day they joined until their first virtual and hybrid event. To see them implementing the tools and ideas that had hours of testing spent on them. To see them inviting their network to join the community.

That's the real ROI.

That's what Julien and the Evolve team call the Return on Humanity.

Communities that are crushing it



Betches

Aleen Kuperman, Samantha Fishbein and Jordana Abraham
Betches Founders



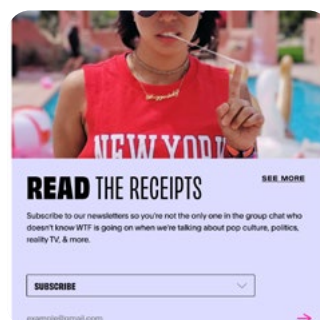
Betches. From their humble blog beginnings to a **community of over 43 million**, this brand is a prime example of how paying attention to and growing with your audience can pay off.



Founded by Aleen Kuperman, Samantha Fishbein and Jordana Abraham as an anonymous blog in 2011 during their time at Cornell University, they soon after found a home on Instagram and became one of the early Instagram famous meme accounts. From there, they went on to write a NYT bestselling book called *"Nice is Just a Place in France."*



Instead of being satisfied with this early success and having their story end there, Betches evolved.



Their content is famous for being relatable, snarky, and creating a space for women to have their voices heard in a genuine and entertaining way. That connection that was felt between the founders and their community was the first step towards building a cross-platform media empire.

Their early material was aimed at college-aged women and young graduates, reflective of their own ages when they first began Betches. As they

Communities that are crushing it



Betches

Aleen Kuperman, Samantha Fishbein and Jordana Abraham
Betches Co-Founders



grew, they knew their audience was growing as well. Rather than become pigeon-holed and cater to a limited audience, Betches sought to expand their reach.

They quickly discovered that major life events for their original audience was dictating the need to expand their offerings. They also realized that a whole new generation of women, “Generation Z,” would potentially be interested in what they had to offer as well. This was the beginning of the Betches Media empire. They spoke to [Forbes](#).

“We feel lucky to have evolved with our audience and to be able to accurately talk and write about the things that are affecting them in every aspect of their lives.” – Betches co-founders

Betches Media has evolved far beyond their original blog and NYT best-selling books to an audience of millions on social media, a full slate of podcasts, Betches Brides, Betches Moms, and more. Betches have created a unique community centered around content that caters to the needs of both millennials and Gen Z women.

The ability to listen to the needs of their community and respond with content that reflects where their audience currently are in life and where they’ve been has been the key to their success. There’s a place for everyone at the Betches table and they’re regularly inviting new people to join.

Now that I'm ready to go for a community model, what are the steps?

You've made the decision to build a community. So what kind of work is it going to take?

STEP 1: DETERMINE HOW TO PRICE MEMBERSHIP

A community has members. Those members should pay to be there, and they will make up your main revenue stream for this business model.

Did you know? **You can structure your pricing for community membership with varying levels of access.**

First of all, ask your members why they want to be part of the community. Is it to access educational content or network with business leads? Maybe it's to stay up to date with the latest news in the industry.

Create an introductory and low-cost first level of membership which includes access to new content for a limited period of time, limited networking with the community and discounted ticket prices for the annual events. Then you can build a second level with access to content on-demand all year long, access to networking roundtables and group chats, or hands-on workshops and masterclasses. Finally, you can have a VIP membership level with access to contact C-level members, exclusive Patreon-style content, and opportunities to meet the speakers, plus free attendance at all yearly events.

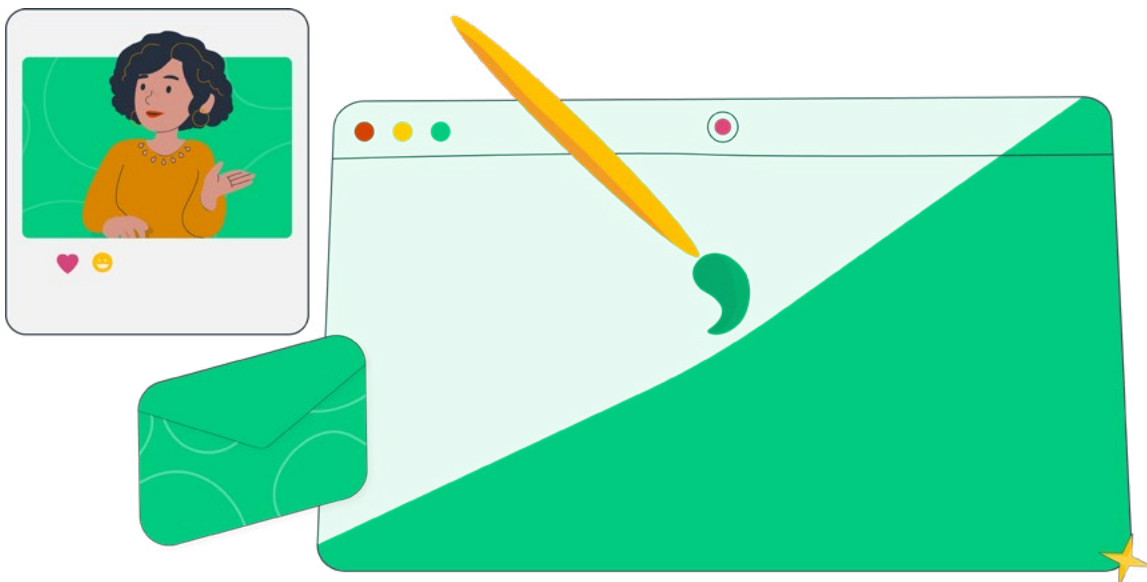
You should also think about different levels of membership for the sponsors and brands who are using your community platform to generate leads and sell their products. You may want to offer them a free or discounted booth at your in-person gatherings or concierge-style matchmaking services with C-level attendees for a higher price.

Now that I'm ready to go for a community model, what are the steps?

STEP 2: BUILD A CONTENT STRATEGY

Now that you've got your audience's attention, it's time to find content that will keep them interested and engaged throughout the year. Once you've held your annual or bi-annual flagship event (whether that's virtual, hybrid, or in-person), start offering a variety of content around that core event. This is where you can get creative.

Consider offering: virtual webinars, networking events, come-on-stage events, live Q&As, interviews, smaller, regional in-person gatherings, community roundtables, virtual focus groups, and more. There's lots of ways to build a content strategy around your community. It's also a great way to learn what your community responds to and what they're not interested in so that you can adjust your strategy accordingly.



Now that I'm ready to go for a community model, what are the steps?

STEP 3 : FIGURE OUT HOW TO MARKET THE COMMUNITY TO EXISTING AND POTENTIAL MEMBERS

Once you've established the foundation for your community, it's time to figure out how to market it! Keep in mind that knowing when to prioritize growing the community and when to prioritize existing members is important to maintaining momentum for your community's growth. **You don't want to alienate your original community members as you find ways to draw in new members since they were the backbone of your community to begin with.**

Be sure to come up with ways to show your appreciation to existing members, especially as your community grows. Perhaps a special status within the community, unique privileges, access to content or content created just for existing members. **You want to be sure that your existing members are happy with the experience you are providing so that they will advocate for you as brand ambassadors and draw in new members for you.**

When reaching out and marketing to new members, have fun with it! Consider offering prizes or lucky draws and advertise these giveaways via social media. Other ideas can include having new big name speakers to draw them into your annual flagship event, then having content that builds on those big name speakers that's offered through community membership. **The key is understanding what your community wants and drawing in your ideal audience with targeted marketing that will get them excited about joining.**



Now that I'm ready to go for a community model, what are the steps?

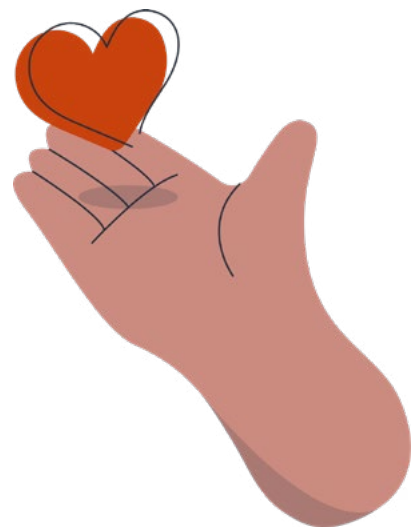
STEP 4: TAKE CARE OF YOUR MEMBERS

We alluded to this before, but it's important for the longevity of your community to ask existing members what they want & need in order to keep them engaged and maintain their enthusiasm and interest. Thanks to your community platform, you have direct access to your members. Make the most of this access by sending surveys, asking them for feedback and making sure they feel heard but putting their suggestions into action.

It's important that all the feedback and information you are gathering from your members is acted on or given proper consideration. Your community wants to know that they are actually making an impact on brand or event decisions. Be sure to keep them involved and let them know how their input has positively impacted the development of both the community and future events.

Don't forget: with membership comes community perks! Take care of your community members by giving them discount codes at various intervals throughout the year so that they can "cash in" on their exclusive membership status. Another way to provide them with value is in the form of new exhibitor booths on your virtual marketplace.

Even better? Give them the chance to get first choice on VIP tickets for your flagship annual event! **Whether it's hybrid, virtual, or in-person, your flagship event is the highlight of your event schedule.** It's also likely that this high-caliber event is what drew your members to your community in the first place. **Early bird VIP access is an easy way to thank them for being valued members of your community.** Consider throwing in a branded thank-you gift as part of the registration process as a small token of appreciation for your community members as well.



Now that I'm ready to go for a community model, what are the steps?

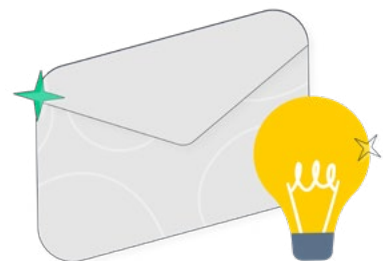
STEP 5: COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT RESOURCES WITHIN YOUR TEAM

This is one of the most important and often overlooked aspects of having a community. If you truly want to build a successful community that will increase the lifespan of your events, you'll need resources to ensure that success.

As you saw with the Typeform case-study, **community management shouldn't be an afterthought, it should be one of your top priorities.** If you're leaving the management of your community to someone who is only able to commit their freetime to provide support rather than all their time, the results will show. Be sure to prioritize this role and budget accordingly if you are truly committed to the success of your community strategy.

A community manager will not only be able to provide support to the members, but they will also proactively be able to provide outreach, engage with the community, administer surveys and gather feedback, organize and analyze data and statistics, serve as a real and consistent point of contact, manage the online platform, provide team training on platform & community benefits, and more.

Although the short term investment might seem steep because your community is in its infancy, the returns you will receive will quickly recuperate the costs and start turning a profit for you sooner than you think. As the bridge between your community and your event, their full attention will be on the members and making sure their needs are met. **The success of your community manager will determine the success of your community strategy.**



What to remember

Communities provide event planners with the opportunity to not only extend the lifespan of their event, but to build brand enthusiasm and serve as a central launching point for future events. When looking at the communities that were built by Typeform, Evolve, and Betches Media, they demonstrate how an ability to listen and respond to your community can pay exponentially.

Choosing a platform that can support your community and help it thrive is an integral consideration when embarking upon a community building strategy. They should have features such as advanced AI that can help your members connect & feel connected with one another, provide content and suggestions that keeps them engaged and interested, and have a media wall & messaging options that reduce their need to go elsewhere for their social media needs.

Communities can make or break a brand. They even have the power to revive events that need a boost. The feedback and data you get from having direct access to your community can give you insight that can't be found elsewhere thanks to their multiple touchpoints. By listening to suggestions directly from your community and being in tune with your audience, you can use this information to rejuvenate and be inspired for future events.

Once you've committed to the community strategy, **be sure to invest in it properly.** Budgeting and directing resources accordingly will give you the greatest chance of succeeding. Hiring a community manager and giving them a fully-loaded platform from which to engage with the community is essential. Although the short term investment might seem steep, communities end up paying for themselves in the long term (sometimes even sooner than you think).

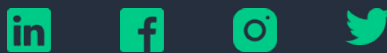


We've got a big announcement coming soon.

IF YOU'RE AN EVENT BRAND THAT HAS A COMMUNITY, YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THIS.

Swapcard's new technology is going to make your life so much easier. And going to help you stay connected with your community all year long.

Follow our social media to get the news first-hand.



Stay tuned

