

MemberWise Webcast

Tuesday 31st October 2023

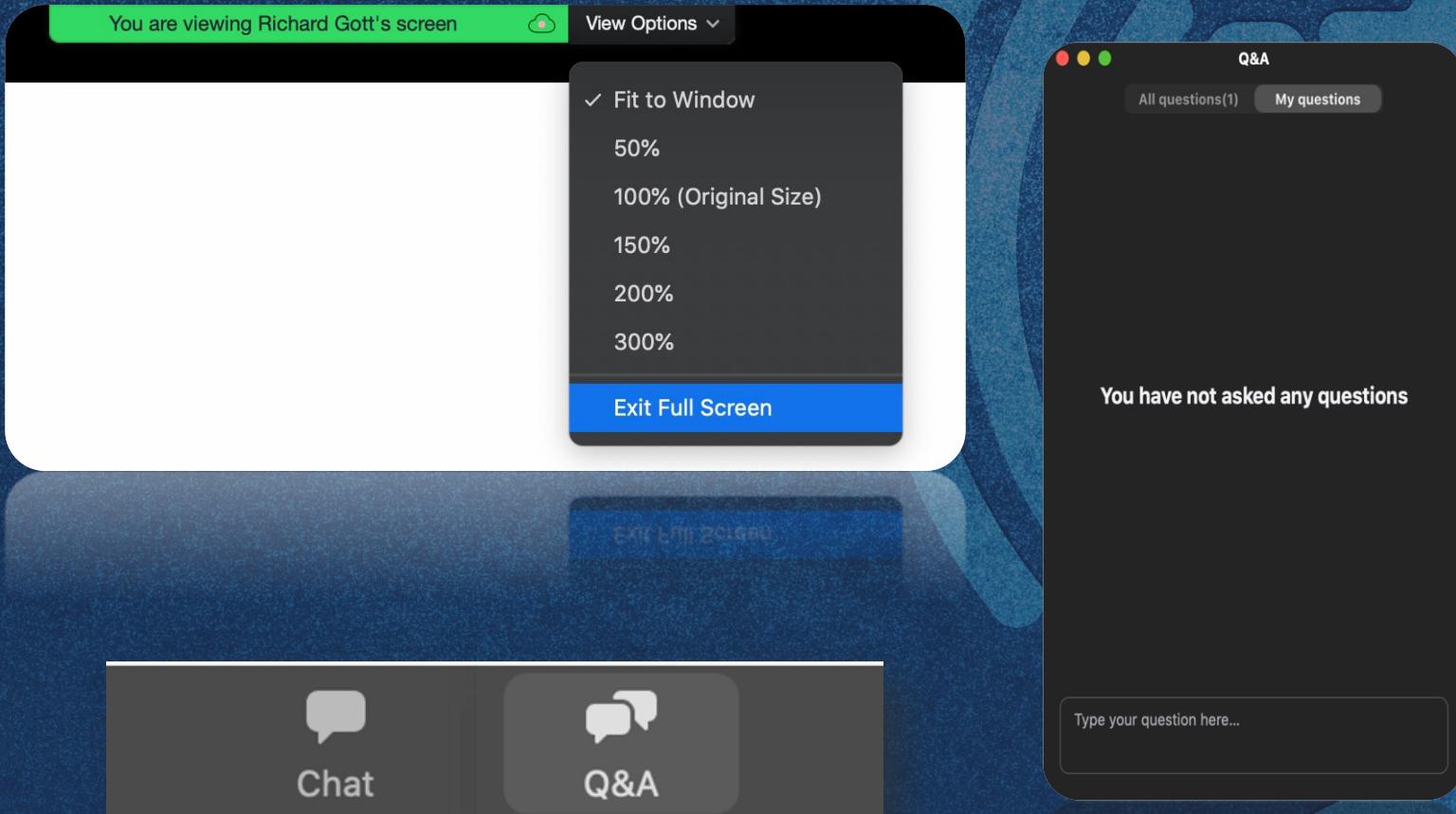


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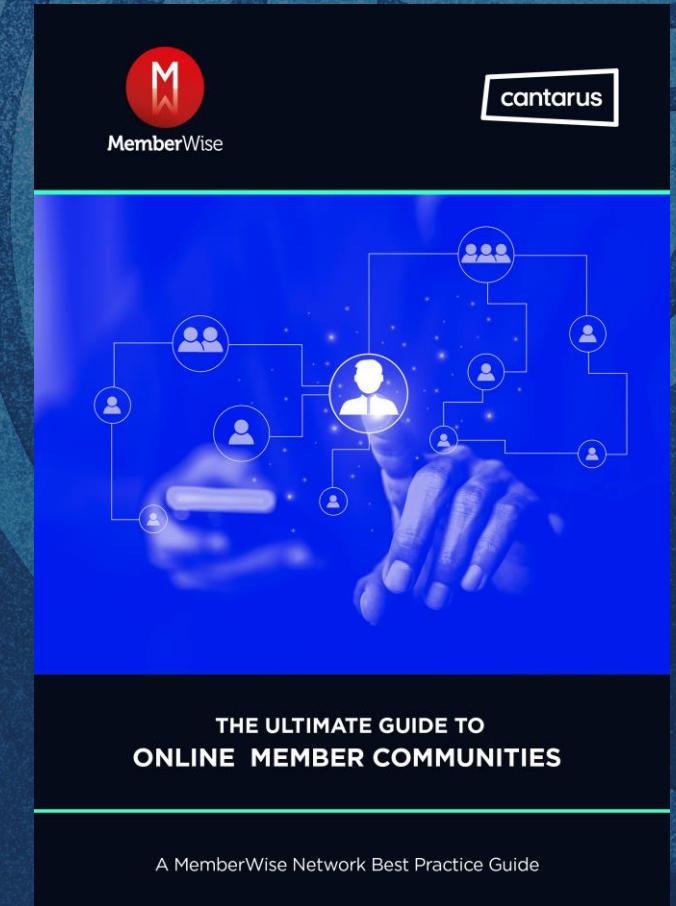


Webcast Functionality

- View options
- Comments
- Questions
- Polls
- Recorded



Revised and Refreshed: The Ultimate Guide to Online Membership Communities With Cantarus



What we will discuss today...

- Learn more about recent product enhancements and application of online community tools in the UK membership sector.
- Review examples of compelling membership-sector online communities
- Understand the new content additions and revisions to the Ultimate Guide
- Have your questions on online community answered

Hello!

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Mark Eichler

Chief Product Officer

Mark.Eichler@cantarus.com



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to discuss...

First Look at the Updated Guide

What is an Online Community Platform?

Key Community Metrics from the DigX 23/24 Report

Product Feature Enhancements

Artificial Intelligence in Online Community

Online Community Strategy Evolution

Questions and Answers

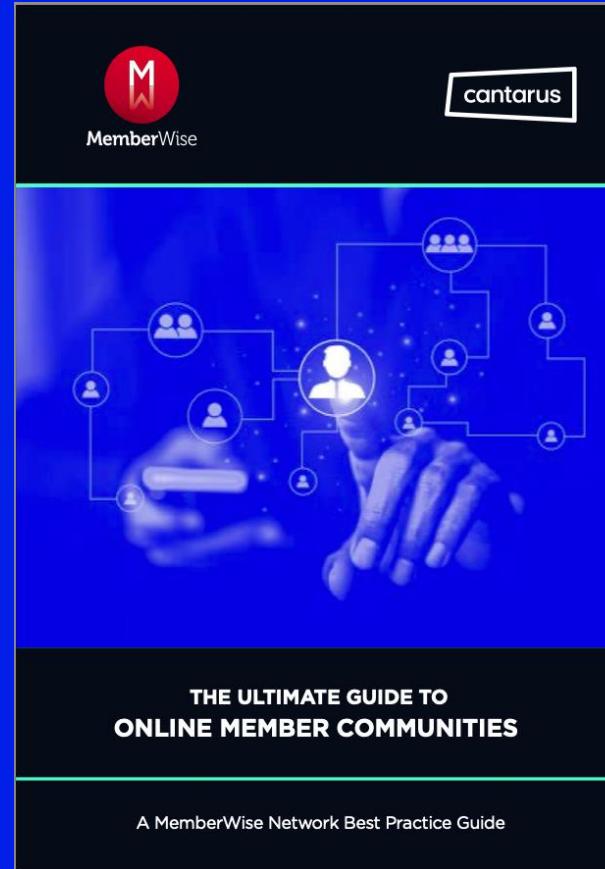


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Revised and Refreshed: The Ultimate Guide to Online Membership Communities – 31 October 2023

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Guide Updated for 2024



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The Ultimate Guide to Online Member Communities

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We are delighted to refresh and expand this overview of online community for membership bodies with our trusted partner, MemberWise. Technology moves fast, and we always value opportunities to help sector leaders keep a finger on the digital pulse. Cantarus serves dozens of membership bodies of all sizes with technology services and consulting with websites, mobile solutions, integration, hosting, consultancy and, of course, online community.

Our community offerings span a number of leading platforms and strategic partnerships. The MemberWise Network App – available to all MemberWise members on both [Apple](#) and [Android](#) app stores – is an excellent example of an integration with one of the excellent community platforms we work with.

Beyond the technology, Cantarus offers the experience and knowledge to lead successful online community projects in the membership sector. Mark Eichler, Cantarus' Principal Consultant leading on online community, has worked with dozens of membership bodies in adopting and optimising their online communities through direct consultancy and product development in the US and the UK. This document, for which Mark is the primary author, reflects his insights from the earliest days of community platforms serving the sector in the mid-2000's.

We look forward to continuing conversations on technology in the membership sector. Please feel free to reach out to us directly or via the vibrant MemberWise community.



Lee Adams
Chief Executive Officer



Mark Eichler
Chief Product Officer

Introduction

We all know what a **community** is – a network of people who connect around shared characteristics, purposes, and/or goals. In the membership sector, community is at the heart of much of what we do and participating in a community of peers is vital to the member value proposition for current and potential members.

An **Online Member Community** is a digital platform, ordinarily managed by a membership organisation, to facilitate members interaction with each other and the organisation primarily via the internet. Online community platforms are adopted to facilitate the core missions of membership bodies through rich engagement and management tools. This guide details the options and merits of online community platforms fit for this purpose specifically within the membership sector. Delivery of Online Member Community is not a typical "tech project" as offering human connection and personalisation can have a significant emotional element. Community platforms allow for nuanced configurations and user experiences sufficient to reinforce and reflect the personality and culture of a membership body.

Like most technologies within a competitive landscape, the online community platform space is alive with innovation. This is especially true for the platforms and solutions providers serving the membership sector. Traditional players are offering new features, capacities, and updated style/branding options while newer entrants to the market are offering some fresh approaches.

What

An online community platform will offer the kinds of experiences offered in public social media platforms, but with additional features for security, integration, and management of the users and content created. With conversation functionality at its heart, online community platforms offer richer engagement experiences for nuanced conversations and engagement options to users. Platform administrators have the tools to manage the review and manage the conversations and content toward community value and standards.

Where

Online community experiences are provided through the browsers, phones and email platforms of its users – typically a community platform will support experiences all three of these platforms. An online community platform will have a central website and/or desktop/mobile app presence with email summaries and updates.

How

The focus of this guide is on utilisation of an online community software platform. This market-place is robust, with dozens of products, price points, modules, and opportunities for integration and customisation. Having recognised the value of online community experiences, several CRM and CMS platforms offer a community feature set either directly within the core product or as a module or extension. These range in general quality from raw to fully formed.

Why

Online community is brought forward to facilitate the engagement of members with each other and with the staff of the organisation. This can be broad, such as an all-members forum, and/or to address specific organisational goals.



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“An Online Member Community, ordinarily managed by a membership organisation or association, facilitates direct members interaction – with each other and the organisation – in online environments. ”

Participant Benefits (including staff participants)



Knowledge
Creation/Access



Human Connection –
Relationships



Programme/Project
Participation

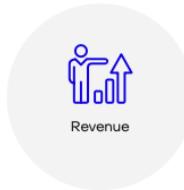
Facilitator Benefits



Insight into
Member
Sentiment



Data
Collection



Revenue



Support Cost
Savings



Marketing Impact



Content
Development

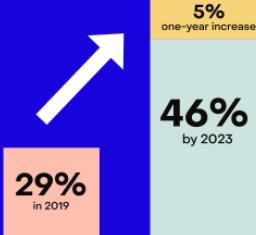


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Community Adoption in 2023

The metrics confirm that membership bodies are responding to the community opportunity like never before. The Digital Excellence (2023/24) Report confirms that online community platform adoption continues to rise in the UK and Ireland membership and associations sector.

46% of membership bodies in the UK confirm adoption of a hosted community platform by 2023. This is up from 29% in 2019 and with 5% total increase in the last year alone. The vast majority – near 70% – of membership professionals surveyed agreed or partly agreed that their online community “Has had a positive impact on member value” (this figure includes those who utilise Facebook or other public social media platforms).



29% in 2019
46% by 2023
5% one-year increase

Nearly half of UK membership bodies report adoption of an online community platform in 2023

Community Benefit in 2023

The 2023 MemberWise Digital Excellence (2023/24) Report further confirms membership bodies are seeing value from their community investments..

The vast majority – over 70% – of membership professionals surveyed agreed or partly agreed that their online community “Has had a positive impact on member value” (this figure includes those who utilise Facebook or other public social media platforms).



72%
report positive impact

MemberWise **2023/24 DX** **DIGITAL EXCELLENCE**

Community Application

In the membership sector, online community is applied to meet numerous business needs. These can include:

- Questions and Answers**
Online community facilitates answers by knowledgeable peers with reputations established by title, employer and other confirmed attributes. Answers to questions on professional practice and workplace dynamics are highly valuable.
- Content Circulation & Comment**
Offering members new content of professional value through online community facilitates member comment and prompts further sharing of related information by members.
- Region, Section, Committee and Interest Group Management/Participation**
Dedicated private spaces reflecting the organisational structure of a membership body are common. Local administrative rights allow chairs to run and manage their groups.
- Member/Customer Endorsement**
Members who love their organisation use the community to endorse their member benefits. “Customer advocacy” features facilitate programmatic rewards and recruitment/management of member advocates.
- Knowledge Creation**
Users contribute what they know, discuss approaches, and create documents and content reflecting consensus, including through wiki-like versioning features.
- Learning “Classrooms”**
Where the learning objectives are light – such as, watch a video, answer questions, discuss in a group – online community may fill learning requirements directly or with an integrated learning platform.
- Programme Management**
Several common programmes are a good fit for being served through online community platforms. Mentoring is an example of where some community products offer a specific module for this purpose.
- Event Registration and Participation**
A number of community platforms offer event registration within the context of community. Utilisation of video from conference presentations, file sharing and private spaces for registrants facilitates pre-event and post-event-experiences.
- Networking**
Members seeking other members to connect with, including through a faceted directory allowing peers to be found by employer, location and interests, are common.
- Sense of Belonging**
Emotional impact drives value for many community participants. Utilisation of community for new member onboarding and welcoming is standard.
- Marketing & Lead Generation**
Opening a subset of online community conversations and resources will allow Google and similar search engines to offer insight into the quality of member-initiated conversations and content.
- Member Sentiment Assessment**
Data and reporting as to emerging professional challenges and trending topics are augmented by polling and survey tools that can offer “finger on the pulse” insights for leadership and staff.

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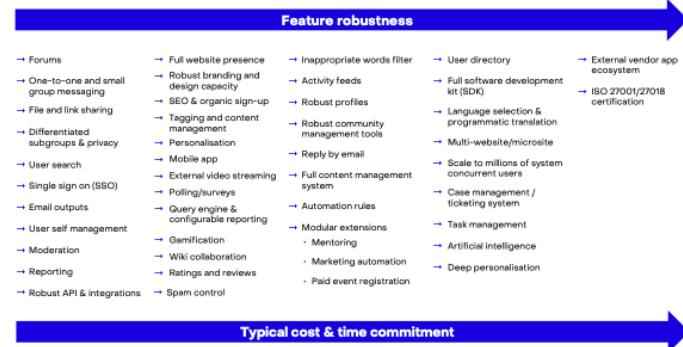
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Online Community Platform Features:

Bringing forth the right mix of platform features is a vital part of platform selection. More features typically equates to more expense, but this can vary by platform.



TOP TIP:

Comparison of features to over 20 community product vendors of all sizes is well-facilitated by the London-based Feverbee community consultancy on their website: www.feverbee.com/community-platforms.

Community Feature Enhancements – 2023 Update

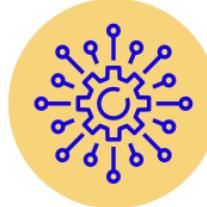
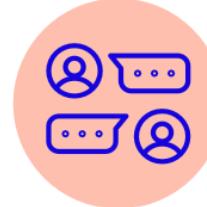
Product feature evolution for established platforms include further progress bundling features like chat into community products.

The largest players specialising in serving the membership and association sectors are continuing to progress integrations with email marketing platforms, enhancing content management opportunities, and even adding customer relationship management tools targeting smaller organisations. New solutions providers offer to empower members to define the spaces in which they network and engage. Facilitating smaller spaces in-addition-to / rather than having the community spaces determined by the organization.

A number of mobile first solutions are being brought to market facilitating traditional social media experiences without the sacrificing of member/user data to the largest multinational corporations. The UX principles established by platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and Reddit are applied to private environments within the smaller spaces of mobile devices.

Artificial Intelligence Features – 2023 Update

But perhaps most compelling product additions in the online community sets space are with the adoption and utilisation of AI features directly within the community platform products. In the past, it was more common for external AI platforms to be utilised with integrations. In 2023 we are seeing AI features within the core community products themselves with no dependency on additional licenses. These new AI-based features may benefit both the providers of the community spaces and the participants in the community. Sentiment analysis and enhanced reporting are among new features allowing community sponsors to better understand the "what, why, and what next" behind the conversations. Members and users are benefiting from more nuanced prompts to continue reading similar content. Perhaps particularly valuable in communities serving membership bodies are tools assisting with the writing posts. The additional confidence in presenting well-formed content to peers may boost volume by those sensitive about their writing skills.



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User Experience

Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, etc. offer community experiences and are valued by much of the world's working-age population. The UX offered by an online community platform will be judged against those offered by multi-billion-pound companies.

Functional usability isn't the only UX factor for user adoption. As the online community is a virtual representation of the membership body, the user should recognise "their" organisation in the online community. First impressions are vital. The benefit of the platform and ideally the membership body must be in evidence at user initial interactions.

1) Value "This content helps me"

2) Interface: "I know how to use this"

3) Place "I know where I am"

4) People "I know who else is here with me"

5) Safety "I can express myself and build relationships here"

The goals of users are different from the goals of the organisation offering an online community. Usability of product features for thread management, moderation, subcommunities, tagging, etc. should be considered in the context of non-technical staff running the platform to meet goals on knowledge creation, engagement, and value.



Online Success Stories from the Membership Sector

Large Membership Body

Annual Turnover £10M - £15M

#Members

Approx. 200 Member Charities

#Staff

20-50



“ I was confident the community project would be a success. While online communities can look engaging and appear to offer strong social/emotional components, the proof of the pudding is in the data. We had the right tools and strategies to focus on specific areas. **”**

Nancy Kinder, Member Community Manager

Temperature Check & Next Steps

Membership bodies encountering a number of the following circumstances may want to review how online community could help:

- Members are asking for online engagement environments.
- Members are self-serving their needs to engage with other members in public social media outside our ability to manage.
- Committees and working groups are managing work in email without more robust tools or organisational visibility.
- Event value ends with the event; members lack access to online presentations and continued conversations
- Leadership needs a better "finger on the pulse" of member sentiment and modern challenges of the profession
- Members asking the same questions repeatedly
- Members who are geographically dispersed want to connect/network
- Due to external factors (e.g. COVID-19) traditional networking opportunities may not be possible
- A short term requirement to demonstrate immediate and tangible member value
- Compelling need to initiate a member benefits app with engagement features

If the business needs and feature sets described here sound compelling, review of platform options and conversations within an online community, like the MemberWise Network, may be a good next step.



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Experience the MemberWise Network's Online Community, MemberWise Connect Today.

<https://connect.memberwise.org.uk>



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CALM
IT'S
POLL
TIME



What is an Online Community Platform?

- An online community platform will offer the kinds of experiences offered in public social media platforms, but with additional features for security, integration, and management of the users and content created.
- Conversation functionality at the heart, but richer
- Nuanced conversations and engagement options with multiple tools
- Platform administrators have the tools to manage the review and manage the conversations and content toward community value and standards.



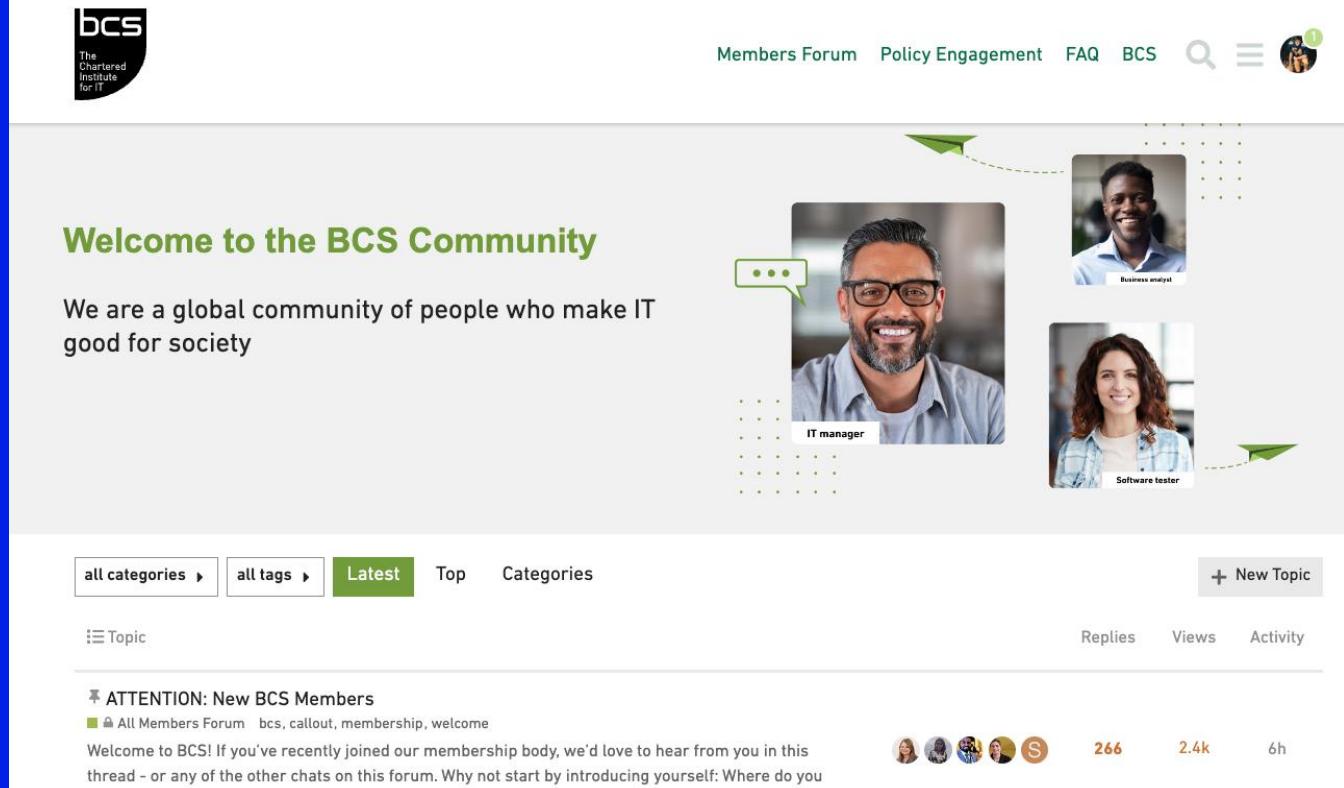
What is an Online Community Platform?

- Forums
- One-to-one and small group messaging
- File and link sharing
- Differentiated subgroups & privacy
- User search
- Single sign on (SSO)
- Email outputs
- User self management
- Moderation
- Reporting
- Robust API & integrations
- Full website presence
- Robust branding and design capacity
- SEO & organic sign-up
- Tagging and content management
- Personalisation
- Mobile app
- External video streaming
- Polling/surveys
- Query engine & configurable reporting
- Gamification
- Wiki collaboration
- Ratings and reviews
- Spam control
- Inappropriate words filter
- Activity feeds
- Robust profiles
- Robust community management tools
- Reply by email
- Full content management system
- Automation rules
- Modular extensions
 - Mentoring
 - Marketing automation
 - Paid event registration
- User directory
- Full software development kit (SDK)
- Language selection & programmatic translation
- Multi-website/microsite
- Scale to millions of system concurrent users
- Case management / ticketing system
- Task management
- Artificial intelligence
- Deep personalisation
- External vendor app ecosystem
- ISO 27001/27018 certification



What is an Online Community Platform?

British Computer Society



The screenshot shows the homepage of the BCS Members Forum. At the top, the BCS logo is visible, followed by a navigation bar with links to 'Members Forum', 'Policy Engagement', 'FAQ', and 'BCS'. A search icon and a user profile icon are also present. The main content area features a green header 'Welcome to the BCS Community' and a sub-header 'We are a global community of people who make IT good for society'. Below this, there are three user profiles: 'IT manager' (a man with glasses), 'Business analyst' (a man in a blue shirt), and 'Software tester' (a woman in a blue shirt). A 'New Topic' button is located in the top right of the main content area. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'all categories', 'all tags', 'Latest' (which is highlighted in green), 'Top', and 'Categories'. Below these buttons, there is a 'Topic' section with a 'Topic' button, 'Replies', 'Views', and 'Activity' buttons. A post from a user named 'ATTENTION: New BCS Members' is shown, with a reply count of 266, 2.4k views, and a 6h timestamp. The post content encourages new members to introduce themselves in the forum.



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What is an Online Community Platform?

British Computer Society



A screenshot of a forum post from the British Computer Society (BCS) website. The post is titled "Let's break the ice! What was your first ever computer?". The post content asks for memories of first computers, mentioning a Windows 1986 computer. The post has 11 likes and was made 10 days ago. The post includes a photograph of a vintage white desktop computer system with a CRT monitor, keyboard, and tower. The BCS logo is in the top left corner of the page, and the top navigation bar includes links for Members Forum, Policy Engagement, FAQ, BCS, and a search bar.



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What is an Online Community Platform?

Cantarus Demo Site

A screenshot of the Cantarus demo site homepage. The header includes a 'Mentor' section, a 'Business' section, a 'Shop' section, and a 'More' section. The main navigation bar has links for 'Find a Mentor', 'My Posts', 'Most Liked', 'Privacy', 'Influencers', 'Stars', and a user profile icon with a '1' notification. The main content area features a large image of a city skyline and a river, with the text 'Welcome to the Community!!' and 'Connect with peers, ask, and answer questions.' Below this, there are buttons for 'all categories', 'all tags', and 'Latest Posts' (which is underlined), followed by 'Categories', 'Unread (1)', 'Top', and 'Docs'. A 'New Topic' button is also present. The 'Latest Posts' section shows two items: 'Example Tutorial Video' and 'Membership Committee - Meeting Minutes 1 April'. Each post includes a user profile icon, reply count (1, 2, 4d), view count (34), and activity count (12d).

Find a Mentor ▶ Business ▶ Shop ▶ More ▶

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Welcome to the Community!!

Connect with peers, ask, and answer questions.

Begin with a search or start a conversation.

all categories ▶ all tags ▶ **Latest Posts** Categories Unread (1) Top Docs + New Topic

Example Tutorial Video

Membership Committee - Meeting Minutes 1 April

1 2 4d

9 34 12d



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Key Community Adoption Metrics

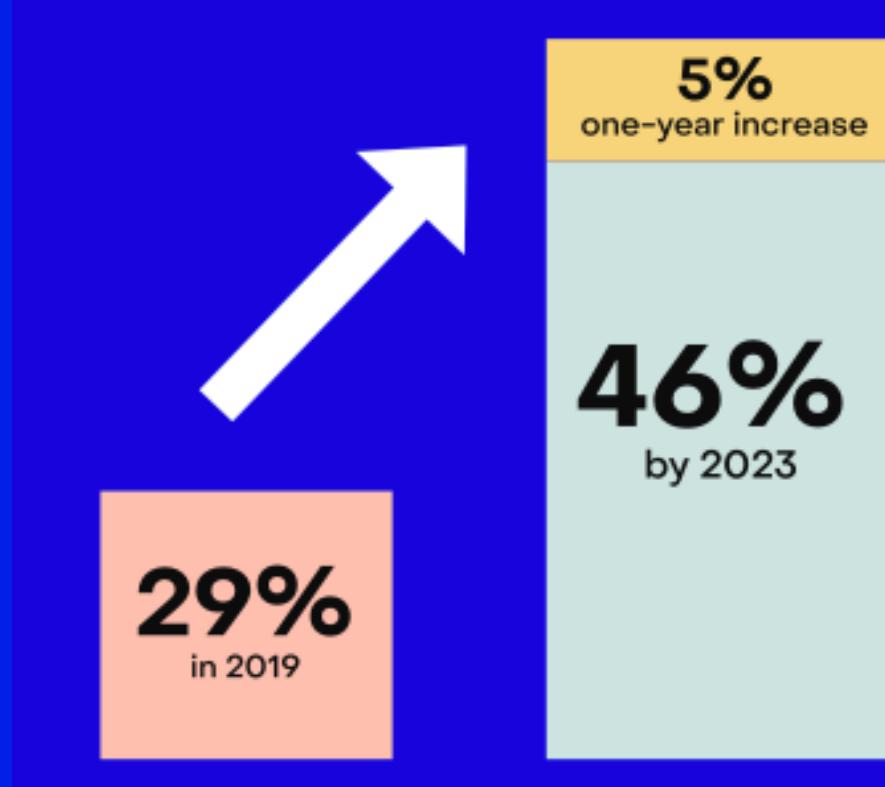


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Key Community Adoption Metrics



**Nealry half of
UK membership
bodies report
adoption of an
online community
platform in 2023**

Key Community Adoption Metrics



Key Community Adoption Metrics



The Tangible Benefits of having an Online Member Community:

	Agree -	Somewhat Agree -	Somewhat Disagree -	Disagree -
Has had a positive impact on member value	28%	44%	15%	8%
Contributes toward member engagement and retention	27%	43%	15%	8%
Has contributed towards increased new member acquisition	16%	29%	23%	20%
Enables us to engage with members on a more regular basis	27%	45%	14%	10%





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TIME



Product Enhancements: Competitive



Product Enhancements: Mobile

platform
apps

social
media
UX

offline
access

notifica-
tions

breaking
content
silos



Product Enhancements: AI



But Wait: What is AI?

Artificial: false, unnatural, contrived

Intelligence: mind, brain, reason



Online Community & AI

Artificial Intelligence reflects machines performing complex tasks in ways that approach human competency

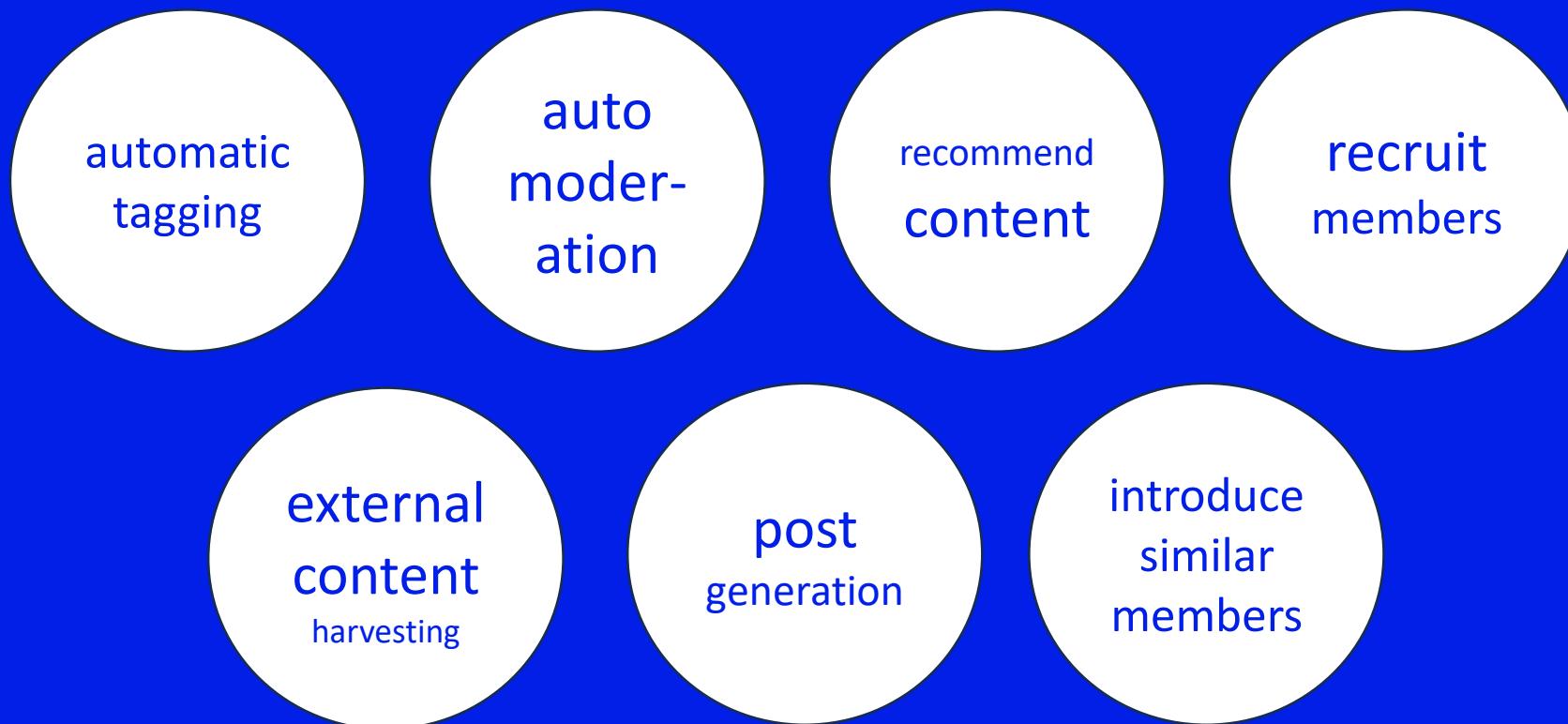


Online Community & AI

Artificial Intelligence has the potential to completely remake the online community space and membership sector tech broadly



Future Enhancements: AI



Membership Sector Tech & AI



higher logic

thrive

The Future is Now: AI and Automation in Association Software

Thursday, November 16th
2pm ET / 11am PT



Rob Wenger
Co-Founder & CEO at
Higher Logic

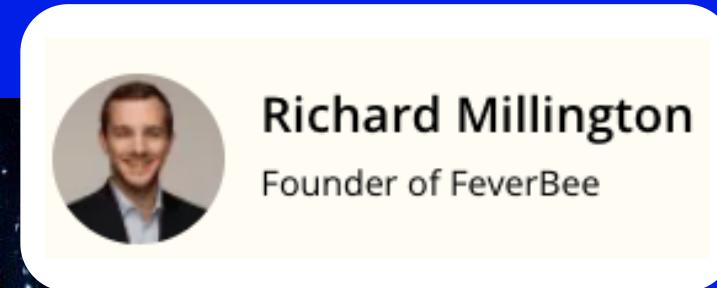


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Online Community Strategy



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Thanks!

Questions?

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Mark Eichler



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