



## GUIDE:

# Managing Online Communities

## What is an online community?

An online community is a tribe of people who come together online who have a shared interest or purpose e.g., Sligo PPN members within a Facebook Group; new Mums in a Breastfeeding Facebook Group; a group of students taking the same online course.

People will join a community for the value but will stay for the community – the connectedness, the support and the camaraderie.

## How to grow an online community?

If you want to create an online community you have to ask yourself these questions.

1. Who will this community serve – what is the shared interest or purpose?
2. How will you provide value?
3. What digital platform will you use – Facebook, WhatsApp, Members' area of a website, Instagram Group?

## How to keep an online community engaged?

Provide a schedule of interaction – set a routine for your members. For example:

- We will go live into the Group once a week
- We will provide an update twice a week
- We will take questions once a week
- Questions already answered will be found in threads, FAQ section
- We will host a panel discussion once a month
- We will have a guest expert join our group once a month
- We will respond to all comments and questions daily
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## Facebook Groups for Community Groups

Facebook is a free platform and your audience is most likely on Facebook so it will be easy to reach them and move them into a group. If you choose to use Facebook as your group you need to decide which type of Group you want to set up. There are 6 types of Facebook Groups.

Group Type	What it Does	
General	This is the default group type and includes the standard set of tools.	
Buy and Sell	This sets the default post type in the group to sales listings, allows you to set a default currency and gathers all sales listings in one place in the group.	
Social Learning	This allows you to create quizzes and lessons and track members' progress.	
Video Games	This allows you to link your group to a specific game and host tournaments for members.	
Work	This lets you post shifts you'd like other people to cover and gives you the option of allowing other members to contact you without being friends.	
Job	This shows a list of all open jobs and includes templates with job salary, location and hours.	

### The Rules of Engagement in a Facebook Group

#### Acknowledge and respond

- Reply to them
- Like their comments

#### Ask open questions to get discussions started

- If you want to consult on a specific issue, you could use a "Poll".
- Tag people / Pages that you think will be interested in getting involved in the discussion, by typing @ followed by their name.

#### Encourage people to invite others to the Group.

- For example, if it is a neighbourhood group, write posts now and again reminding people to invite their neighbours.

#### If your organisation also has a Facebook Page, you can post in your Group as your Page.

- If you are posting on behalf of your organisation, its best to post as your Page, so that people can clearly see that you are posting as a representative of the organisation.

#### Have a few "moderators"

- These are people who keep an eye on the group and make sure everyone is playing nicely!
- Don't leave it all to one person.
- Have a way of communicating between moderators, so you can sort things out together. This could be a separate, closed group.
- Have a Code of Conduct that your group has agreed about how people will speak to each other, and pin this to the top of your Group.

#### Try to avoid making important decisions over Facebook.

- If there is a decision to be made, remind people when your next meeting is and how they can get involved.
- If people make suggestions or have ideas about what your organisation could be doing, acknowledge their ideas and remind them how they can get more involved in your organisation/association. Suggest adding the item to your next meeting agenda. Don't try to have important discussions on Facebook.

#### If there is a conflict, intervene early

- If people get into a disagreement, intervene early to avoid a long thread with lots of comments. Sometimes the best thing you can do is say something like "I think everyone's had their say here – let's agree to disagree and park this discussion for now".
- Remind people about the Group's Code of Conduct, if necessary.