

7 Types of Online Communities Nonprofits Use to Advance their Mission.

More and more nonprofits are utilizing private online communities to engage their members and make a greater impact in their focus areas. While social media strategies remain prevalent in larger nonprofits, nonprofits of all sizes are adding private communities to their digital marketing efforts to collaborate and connect more deeply with their networks.



There are many different reasons why a nonprofit might set up an online network. Some of the most common initiatives include increasing event attendance, improving development efforts, enhancing member retention, creating new membership revenue channels, activating a volunteer base, advancing impact reporting, driving innovation among subject matter experts, and collaborating with external partners. Since many organizations find it difficult to begin and develop these types of initiatives with public social media outlets, they are setting up online communities that are purpose-built for their needs.

While some nonprofits established private online communities years ago, most don't have a way for members, donors, volunteers, partners, or other constituents to communicate online except by following Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram feeds. Even fewer organizations offer ways for these parties to meaningfully collaborate with one another.

If your organization, or one you are a member of, is considering ways to improve its member experience or to increase its impact, this list of seven online community types might help spark your imagination.

Discussion / Mastermind Communities

This is an innovative community that is built for knowledge sharing and collaboration. You might have experts and novices in this community ideating, sharing best practices and research, helping advance a particular field, usually scientific or practical in nature. The goal of this type of community is to promote new ideas in their sector or area of focus and help foster communication among a wide range of academics, professionals, practitioners, and individual parties that would otherwise not be able to easily connect.



CONSCIOUS CAPITALISM®



ACADEMIC CONSORTIUM FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE & HEALTH



Compete.
Council on Competitiveness

Our customers with this community type

Professional Networking Communities

Oftentimes nonprofits work in partnership with licensed professionals or a specific sub-industry or profession. Nonprofits may choose to build a community that is beneficial to those professionals, while simultaneously promoting their mission in that industry. For instance, a diversity focused nonprofit might create a valuable community for HR professionals and then utilize it to promote healthy approaches to diversity hiring. Well before you can promote your mission, however, you must build a valuable community for that group of professionals where they share jobs, resources, and make professional connections.



Our customers with this community type

Learning / Advice Communities

If your nonprofit produces educational content or works with a group of certified subject matter experts, you might build a community geared toward sharing knowledge and expert advice to help members learn about latest developments, best practices, and latest procedures. Nonprofits usually can seamlessly use this type of community to promote courses or certification programs.



Our customers with this community type

Advocacy Communities

Many not-for-profits have political and social advocacy programming, but have no consistent way to communicate with partners, organizers, volunteers, and other interested parties. Communities of this sort are meant to help mobilize constituents toward action, advocacy, and conducting strategic planning for national, regional, and local movements. You might include things that would be useful to advocates of your organization's mission (i.e. tips, light educational materials, swag, contests, and awards).



Our customers with this community type

Support Communities

Whether struggling with addiction, disease, a difficult situation, or against discrimination, odds are your nonprofit has a community that needs more support. By gathering these members together, they can give one another much needed comfort in trying times, provide strategies for moving forward, all while promoting a sense of community and loyalty to your organization.



Our customers with this community type

Action or Volunteer Communities

Finding reliable volunteers is difficult. So many organizations utilize online communities to search for, develop, and stay in contact with their volunteers. For many organizations, good volunteers are their lifeblood, but it takes work to mold and shape them into valuable contributors. Oftentimes these networks include training, signup forms, fun perks, event discounts, and help your team coordinate events and other programming.



Our customers with this community type

Fan / Interest Communities

Some nonprofits have more than donors and volunteers, some have dedicated fans of their brand. However, these organizations find it hard to provide meaningful benefit back to this body of dedicated devotees and small donors. For fan communities the goal is to raise awareness, conduct donation drives, and create a fun social environment where they get more in return for their devotion, turning them from fans to superfans.



Our customers with this community type

Any number of strategies might work for an organization. In fact, many organizations find it beneficial to launch online networks that support just a small aspect of their mission. That said, whatever your application, it is vitally important to clarify your community goals, vision, and member outcomes you are looking to achieve. That way, you can ensure the community you create is truly purpose-built for your organization's objectives.

Hivebrite is an all-in-one community management and engagement platform.

It empowers organizations to launch, manage, and grow fully branded private communities. Hivebrite is completely customizable and provides all the tools needed to strengthen community engagement.

Over 600 customers worldwide, including the American Heart Association, JA Worldwide, Earthwatch, the University of Notre Dame, and Princeton University Advancement, use Hivebrite to create and engage vibrant communities.