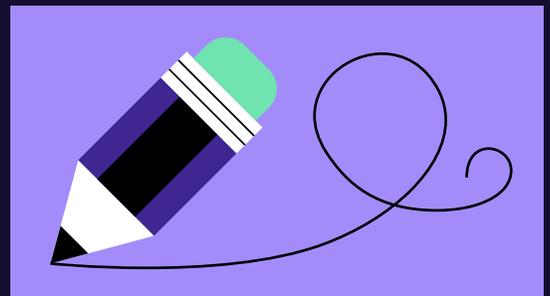
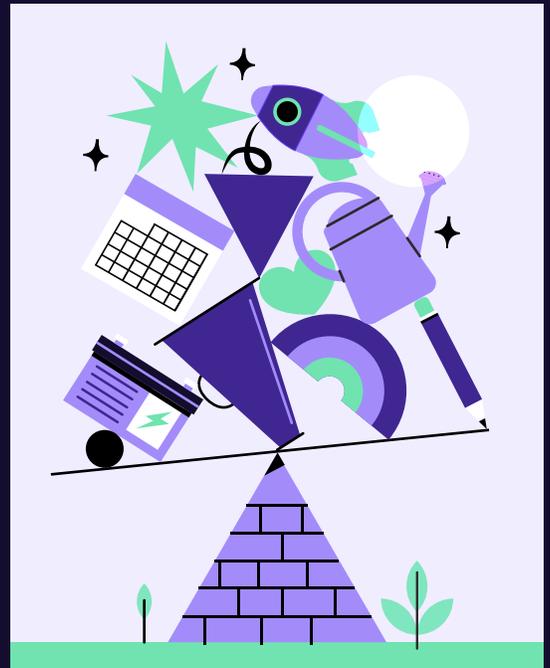
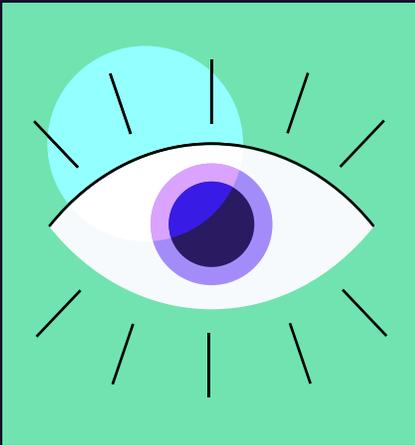


The 2022 Community-Led Report



Contents

Intro	03
Survey Respondents	04-05
The Big Picture	06
Trend 1: Community Industry Growth	07-09
Trend 2: Team Scope & Function	10-13
Trend 3: Empowerment	14-17
Trend 4: Cross-functionality	18-21
Most Desired Support	22
Community-Led Growth Model	23-25
Closing Words	26
Glossary	27-28

We've come so far in the past decade — but we've reached a critical point in the community industry

The days of the Community Manager being an under-resourced, one-person team are on their way out — and we have the data to prove it.

Like many community professionals, I stumbled my way into the industry unintentionally back in 2010. I didn't know any other Community Managers, and whenever I tried to explain what my job was (even to people at the same company!) I'd be met with blank stares. Career progression, too, was tough — any time I looked for a new role in community, I'd find job opportunities were few and far between.

Looking back, it's incredible to see how much has changed in the past decade. We've come so far in terms of resources, buy-in, and cross-functional understanding, not to mention the fact that there's now an entire career path for community professionals with more and more job openings popping up every week. The days of the Community Manager being an under-resourced, one-person team are on their way out — and we have the data to prove it.

But that's not the whole story. We've finally reached a point where companies, large and small, have recognized that this is a critical role to have within their organizations — but a cohesive understanding of the community function at a company still isn't fully realized. We recognize that there's a considerable way to go, and we'll be highlighting areas of opportunity in this report.

We're at a critical moment in the community industry, where the choices that we, as community professionals, make and the direction that companies decide to take can and will dramatically impact what the function looks like 10 years from now.

This is our attempt at figuring out the baseline and providing guidance for anyone interested in investing in community.

We hope you find the data as fascinating and valuable as we did!

Alex Angel

Chief Community Officer, [Commsor & The Community Club](#)

Survey Respondents

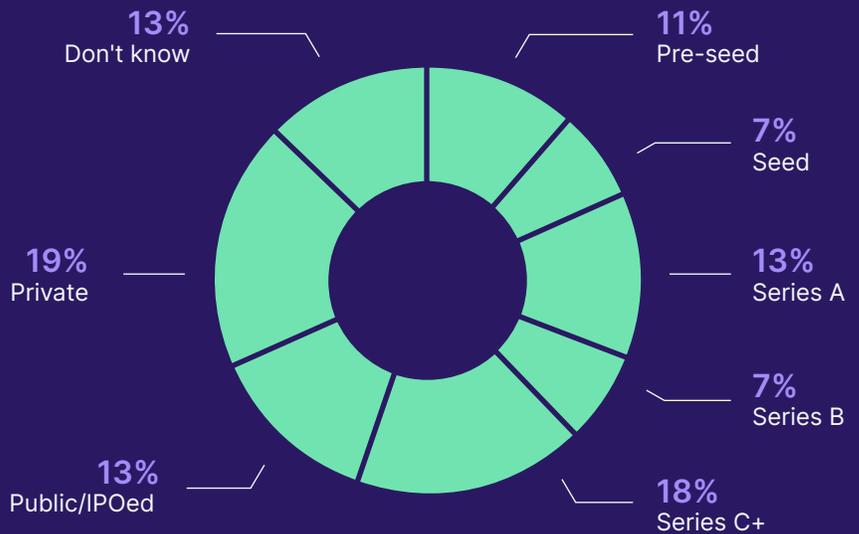
250+
RESPONDENTS

15
INDUSTRIES

Our survey respondents were largely people within our immediate network and just outside of it. That doesn't mean the data is bunk, but it's important to go into this report with an understanding of who the respondents are and why some numbers skew the way they do.

For example, most of our respondents are likely to work for an organization that has a community or is thinking about building one, which isn't necessarily a true reflection of how many companies in wider networks actually have a community or are thinking about building one.

This report is merely a starting point for discussion and an attempt to bring some numbers and clarity to conversations that are happening in the industry. If there are data points we haven't shared in this report that you're curious about, please do reach out to us and we can dig into the responses and provide some more detail.

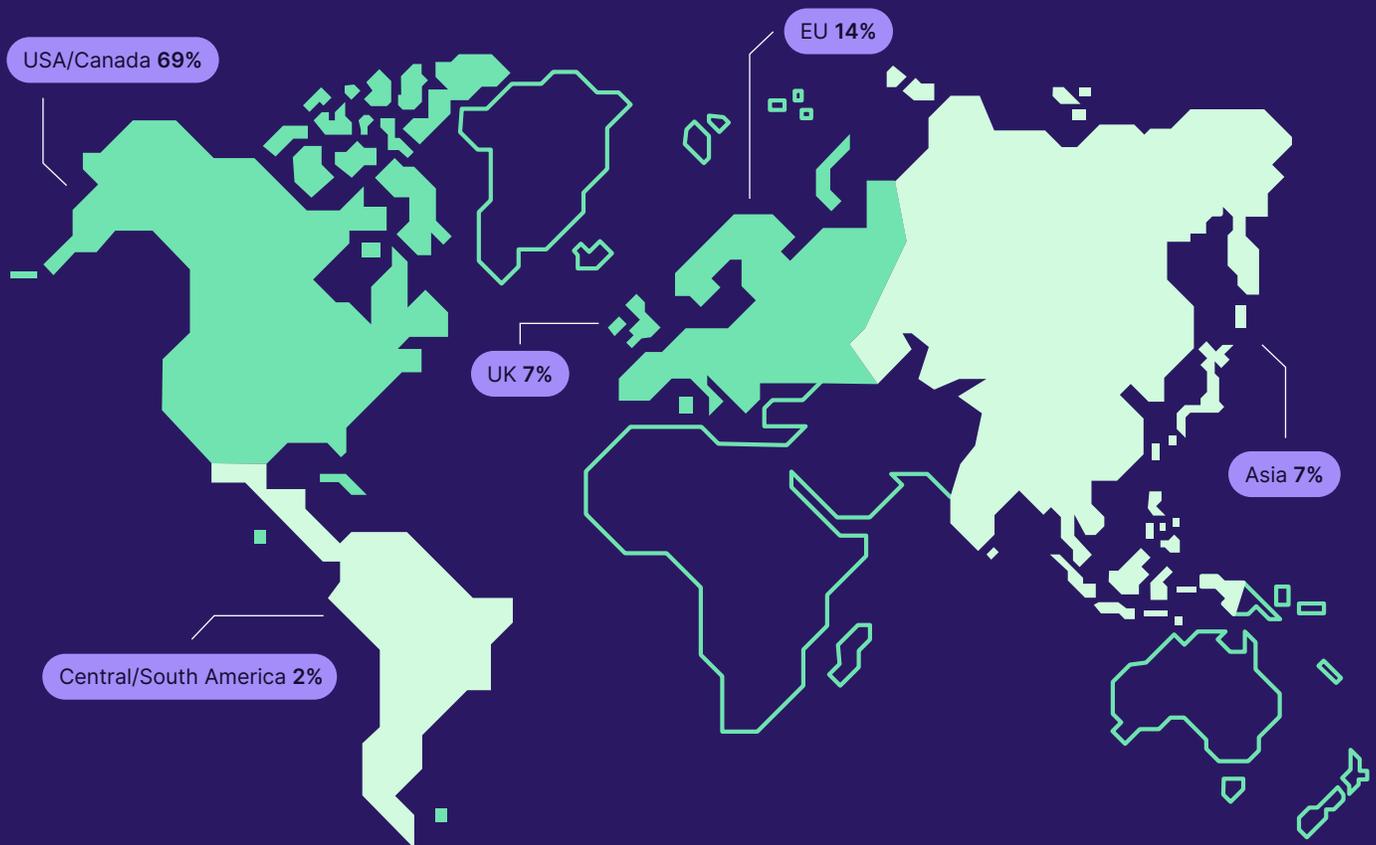
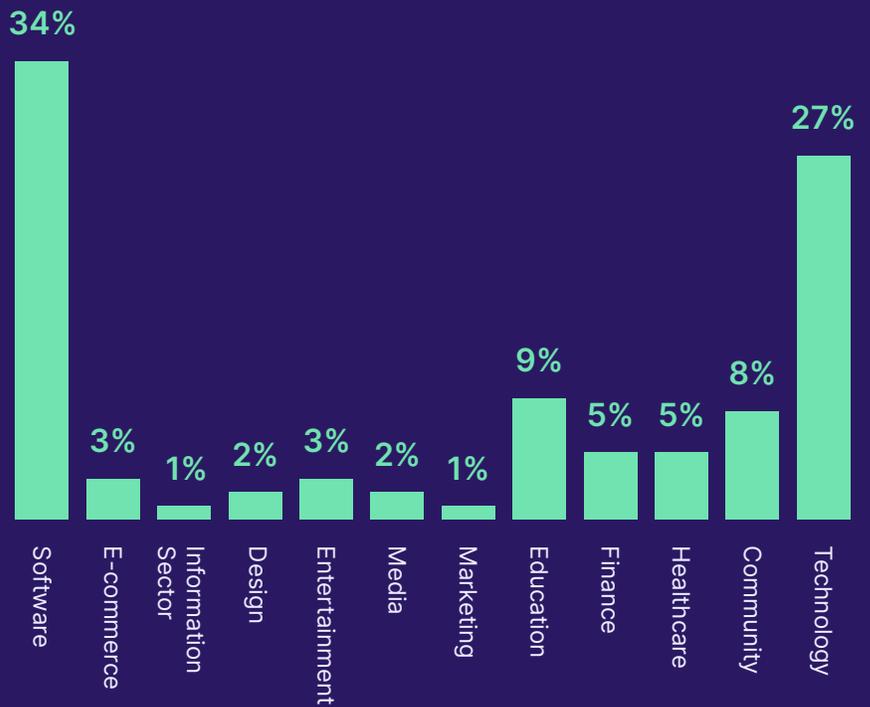


Company stage

There were a handful of ways we could have segmented the data, but we believe that understanding what companies at different stages (specifically funding stages) are doing with regard to community would be the most relatable way to consume the information in this report. As such, we've grouped our respondents into four categories: pre-seed to Series A companies, Series B companies and beyond (referred to hereafter as Series B+), IPOed/publicly held companies (referred to hereafter as IPOed), and privately held companies.

Industries & Locations

While only 12 industries are highlighted in this graph, 15 different industries are represented in this report. We had a handful of additional industries with groups of respondents that were a little too small to represent graphically. Notable are: Energy, Science, and Travel.



The Big Picture



TREND 01

We're at a pivotal time for community industry growth



TREND 02

Community teams' structure and function are evolving



TREND 03

Community teams are more empowered — but there's still work to be done



TREND 04

There's room for growth when it comes to cross-functionality

TREND 01

We're at a Pivotal Time for Community Industry Growth



"Being Community-Led means that community is the engine, not a sidecar, of your business. By placing people at the center of everything you do, you have an opportunity to deliver a better experience for customers and more impact for the business. To build scalability and sustainability, let community lead the way."

Brian Oblinger

Chief Community Officer, Strategic Consultant, In Before the Lock Co-host

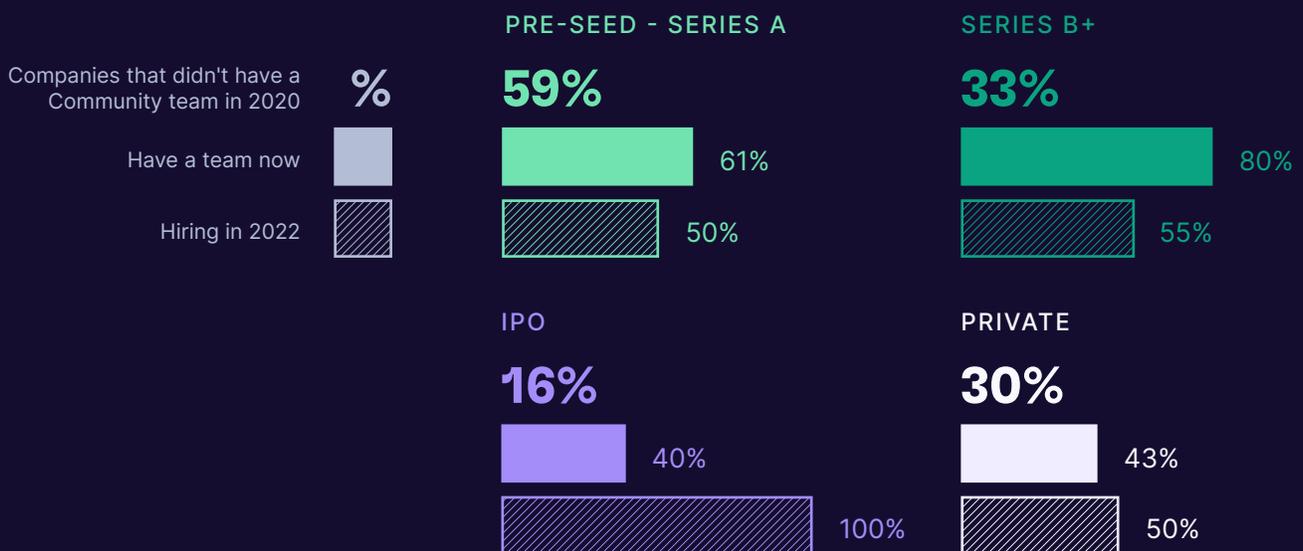


A glance at The Community Club's ever-growing jobs board is a wonderful indicator of just how fast the industry has expanded in recent years — and our survey data validates that incredible growth. In fact, the past two years have highlighted a clear tipping point for many companies.

% of companies with a Community team



Growth from 2020 to now



83%

of respondents worked at orgs with a dedicated Community Manager

55%

are hiring for community roles in 2022



In 2020, 41% of pre-seed through Series A, 67% of Series B+, 84% of IPOed, and 70% of privately held companies had a dedicated Community team. Fast forward to 2022, and those numbers have grown to 79%, 95%, 94%, and 83% respectively.

Most larger companies now have an established Community team, while the newer ones still have work to do in this area. These newer companies are clearly thinking about community early, but it hasn't necessarily been one of their first hires.

Most larger companies now have an established Community team, while newer organizations still have work to do.

The size of those new Community teams proved interesting, too. While most companies that didn't have a Community team in 2020 hired 1-2 people, an impressive 20% of IPOed companies jumped to 3-4 community pros, and 15% of Series B+ companies to teams of 5-6. For companies that didn't have a Community team in 2020, it's really encouraging to see that roughly half of pre-seed through Series A, Series B, and privately held companies plan to hire community professionals this year, while all IPOed organizations plan to hire in 2022.

Outside of the 0-1 team hiring, there were many other team growth trends worth highlighting. A majority of companies went from having 1-2 Community Managers to 3-4, and some established companies went from teams of 3-4 to teams of 10-21+!

There were a few companies that did, unfortunately, have to lay off a number of Community team members, but they plan to hire again in 2022. While we don't know the exact reasons for these layoffs, we can make some suppositions. A number of companies were acquired in the past year, and there may have been some restructuring. It's also possible that companies realized they needed to change their strategy for 2022 and reassessed which roles were important. These are but two guesses, and not a harbinger of something more widespread in the industry.

TREND 02

Community Teams' Structure and Function are Evolving



"Being Community-Led has meant that the companies we worked with became more nimble, more aware of changes in the market, and more focused on what works for their customers. Rather than working in isolation, these companies embrace negative feedback, work with customers to find creative solutions to problems they've flagged, and have the ability to lean on their communities in times of need or crisis."

Vincent Boon

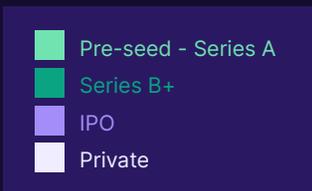
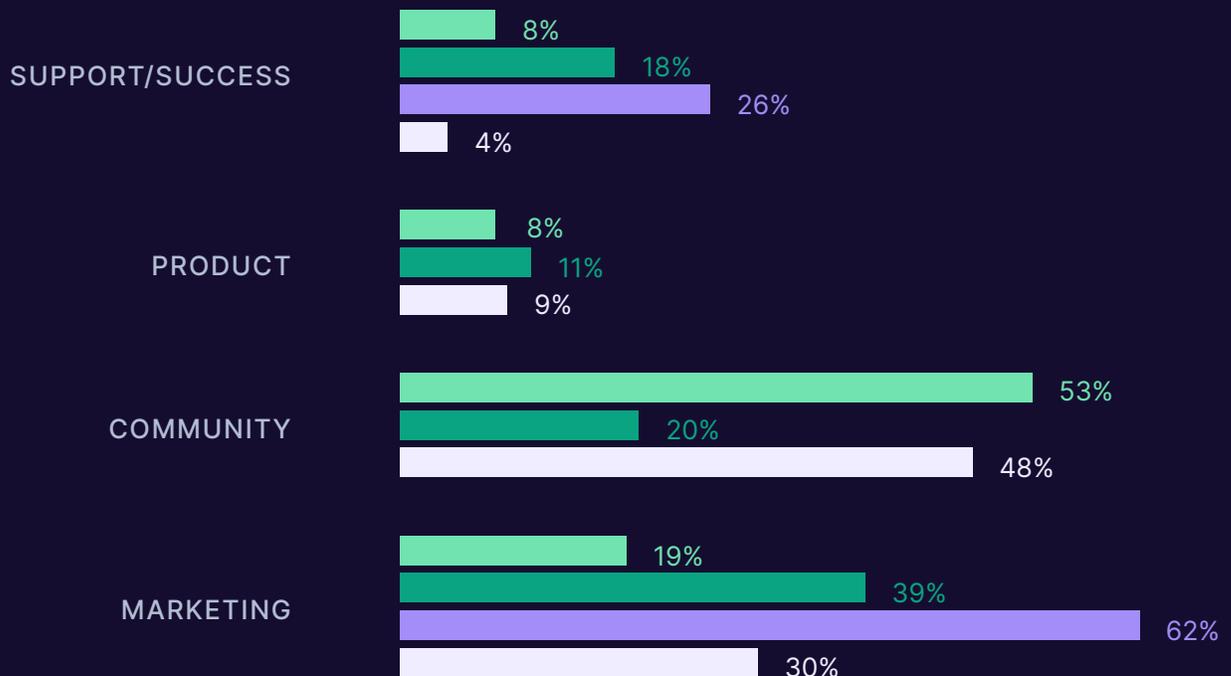
Co-founder, Director, Standing on Giants



It may not surprise industry pros that it's most common for Community teams to report to a Marketing department, especially at established companies. What is interesting to note, however, is that none of our respondents at IPOed companies have a Community department that reports directly to the CEO.

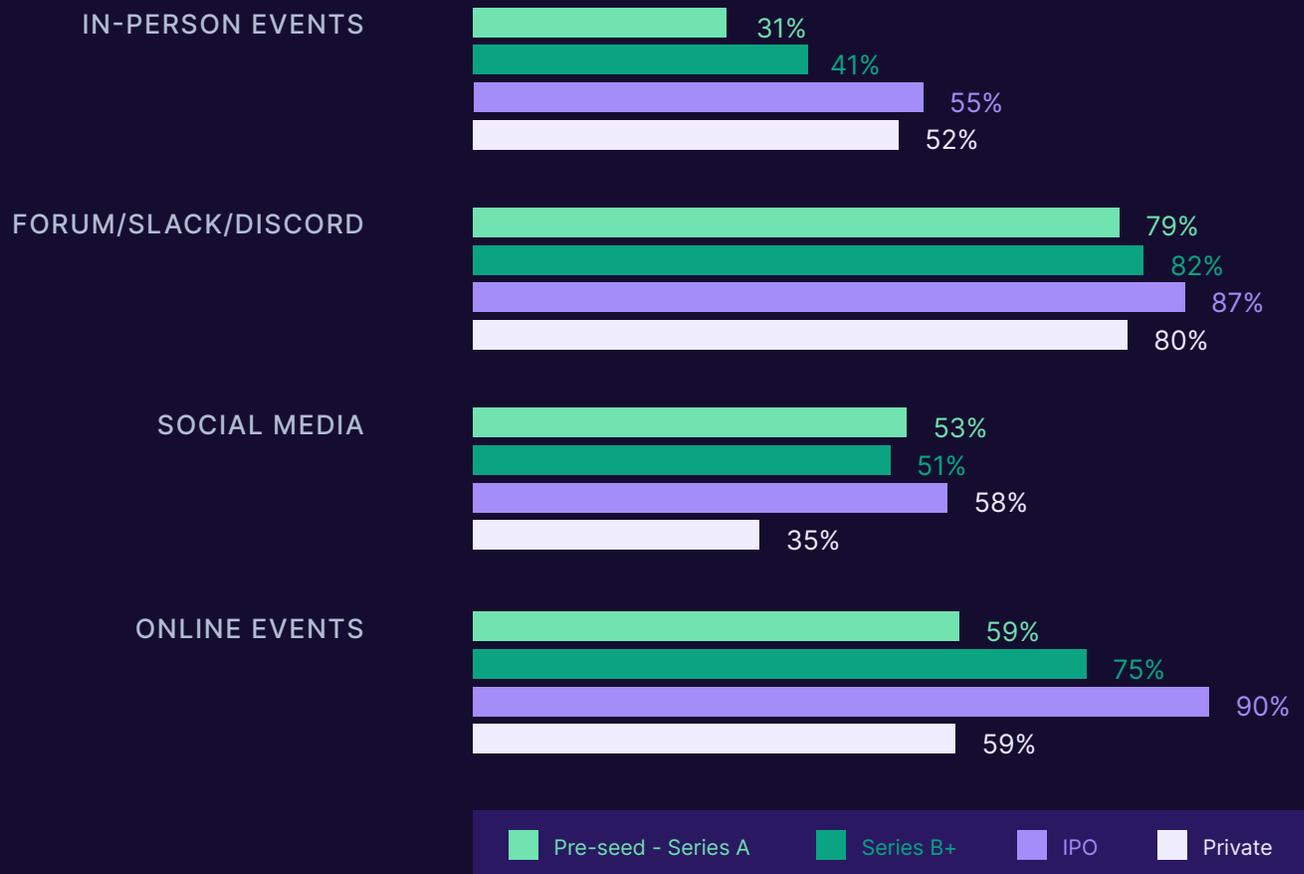
The fact that later-stage companies tend to have Community *teams* that report to other departments, while earlier-stage companies have Community *departments* that report to the CEO highlights the shift in Community-Led thinking. We'll keep our eyes and ears open for changes at later-stage companies that plan to add Community leadership roles this year into next.

Community team reports into



Community team responsibilities were similar across the board, as were the most common community engagement channels. Over a third (36%) of teams still own social media management, though that number trends downwards the more established an organization is. Ideally, Community and Social Media would be separate teams with different goals. But for newer companies with a smaller headcount, it makes sense to (preferably temporarily) combine the responsibilities.

Most common community engagement channels

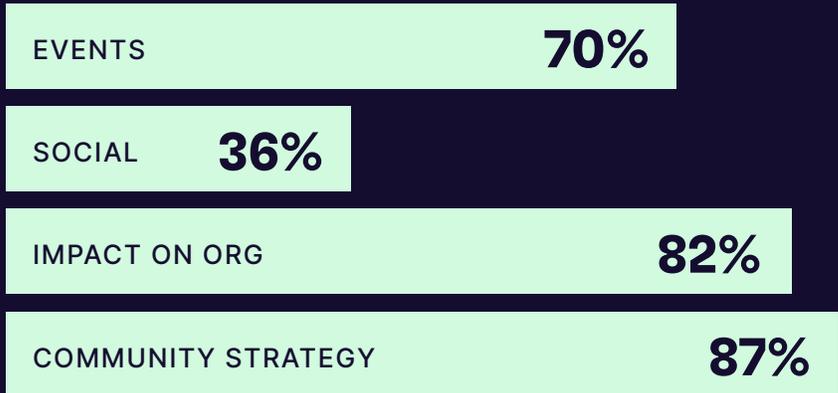


The data collected on Community team goals was something of a mixed bag. In a perfect Community-Led world, 100% of Community teams would be working towards goals that have a direct impact on the organization. Our survey data shows that the more established a company is, the more likely their Community teams are to be working towards more than just vanity metrics — with Community team goals that tie into company goals — which is great to see.

Newly founded companies that are still trying to figure out how to set company-level OKRs and don't have goals for the Community team get a bit of a pass — but we'll be looking to them to formalize and better understand what the Community team could bring to the table by our next survey! If you're part of a Community team without goals, or one that has goals based solely on vanity metrics, check out our [Community-Led Growth Model](#) for some examples of metrics that paint a clear picture of how Community impacts all teams within the company.

Community team responsibilities

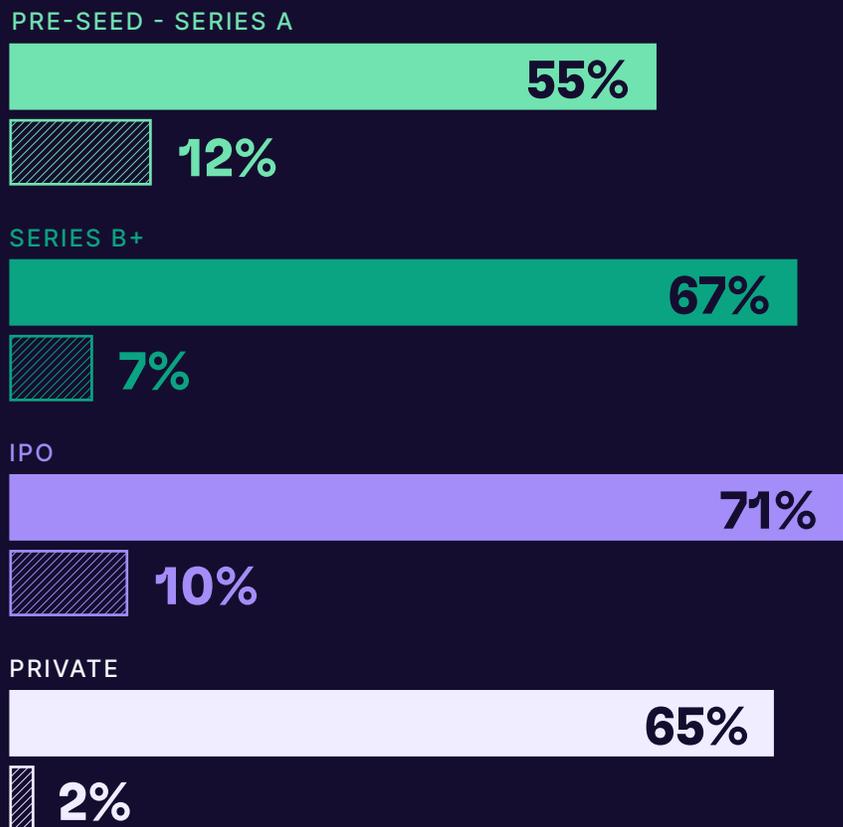
(Average % for all company stages)



Community team goals

% of Community teams with goals that tie directly to company goals

% of Community teams who don't have goals



For those who are primarily focused on growing the total number of members, number of posts, etc. — start thinking about where there are opportunities to provide more valuable insights for other teams. For example, how much content generated by the community can the Marketing team use or share? How many community ideas inspire new product features? How does being a community member impact time to close for Sales? What does the retention of a customer look like if they're a member of the community vs. not for Success? What percentage of support issues are handled by the community vs. the Support team? You'll find guidance like this and more in our [CLG model](#).

TREND 03

Community Teams Are More Empowered — But There's Still Work to Be Done



"Community-Led to me translates immediately to 'people-led'. To be Community-Led is to understand that your community voice comes first in everything. From the space, type of content, design of the community, product, and marketing — everything that you do is based on their feedback and engagement."

Shana Sumers

Senior Manager, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Communities,
HubSpot



Several key Community-Led indicators are grouped within this chapter: control over the community roadmap, leadership representation and buy-in, whether or not the community is a core part of business strategy, and compensation for community pros. As seems to be the trend in most areas, the data we collected is encouraging — but there's plenty of room for growth.

A strong contingent, roughly 90% across company stages, feel they have some to complete control over their community roadmaps. We love to see this, as it is an important piece of the community empowerment puzzle. Control over your own roadmap shows that your team has decision-making power within the organization, is better able to collaborate cross-functionally, and that there is a level of trust from The Powers That Be over the work that you're doing (even if they don't necessarily *understand* it).

Community leadership representation

■ % of Community teams with leadership representation now
 ■ % of Community teams that have leadership representation planned for the future

PRE-SEED - SERIES A



SERIES B+



IPO



PRIVATE

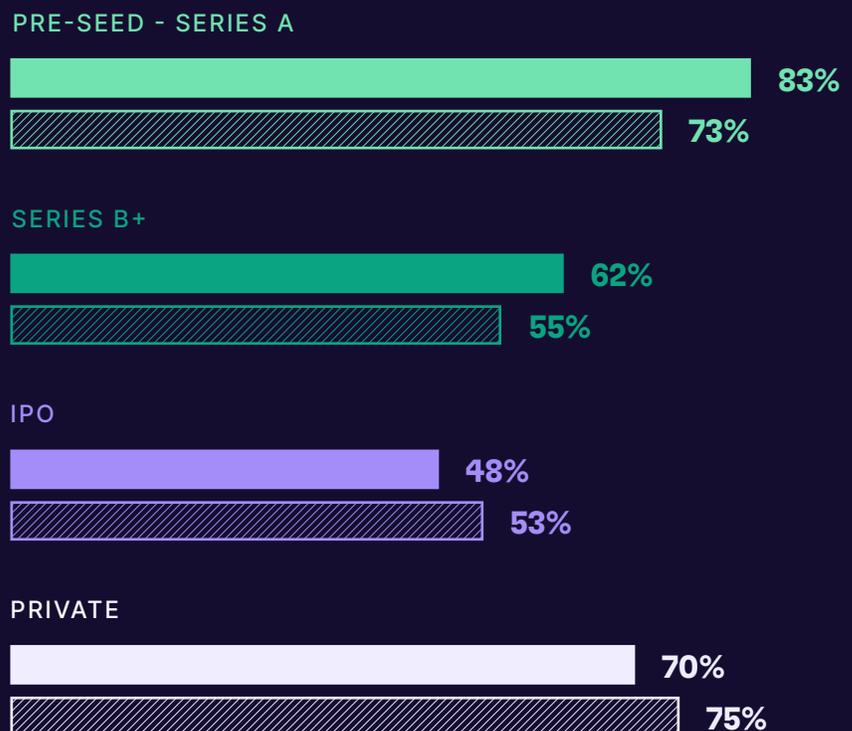


When it comes to Community representation on the leadership team, our data painted an interesting picture. While fewer pre-seed and Series A organizations have established Community teams, they're ahead of the curve when it comes to leadership representation. It's unsurprising that established organizations have less representation, but still exciting to see that some of them are indeed planning to add Community leadership representation in the near future.

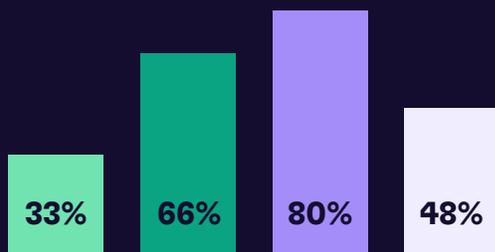
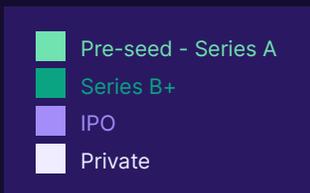
Interestingly, board awareness of community was strongest at different ends of the spectrum, at pre-seed through Series A (83%) and privately held (70%) companies. However, awareness did not indicate that they actually *understood* the impact. Board awareness *and* understanding are critical for a variety of reasons: board members can be allies during strategic planning and budgeting, they can offer assistance and resource connections, and they'll have an easier time seeing the bigger picture of how community fits into the rest of the organization. It's on Community teams to advocate up the chain for board awareness and to craft a compelling story about the community and the team.

Board awareness of community impact

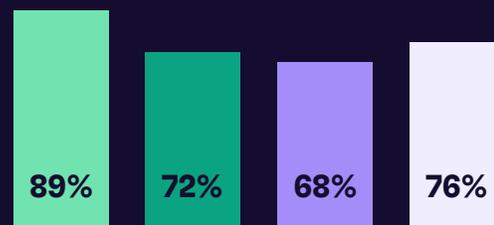
% of boards who are aware of their community
 % of boards who are aware of their community **and** understand the impact community has on the org



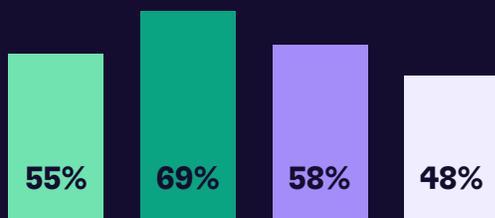
58% of community pros feel they are being fairly compensated for their work.



% OF COMMUNITY TEAMS WITH A DEDICATED BUDGET



% ORGS THAT TREAT COMMUNITY AS PART OF THE CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY



% WHO THINK COMMUNITY TEAM MEMBERS ARE COMPENSATED FAIRLY



% WHO FEEL THEY HAVE CONTROL OVER THEIR COMMUNITY ROADMAPS

Another important Community-Led indicator is whether organizations treat community as a core part of their business strategy. Pre-seed through Series A companies (89%) scored highest here, with IPOed companies (68%) falling behind. The real value of these results won't be fully realized until we run this report again later this year. Community must be treated as a core aspect of the business's overall strategy, otherwise the fact that there is a team that has a budget and has control over their roadmap has little meaning.

As for compensation: on average, 58% of respondents feel they are being fairly paid for their work. Our [2020 Community Job Survey](#) indicated that the average salary for community pros with 1-3 years of experience was \$78k, and soon-to-be-published data from our 2021 Job Survey shows that there has been a notable increase to \$84k. We're already seeing positive trends toward fair compensation, but there is room for improvement.

This goes hand in hand with our data on leadership buy-in. If only 57% of exec teams at all company stages understand the true impact of community, it's difficult to advocate for fair compensation for the Community team. We'll have an updated Community Job Survey out this year with more insights on how salaries and compensation packages have evolved.

TREND 04

There's Room for Growth When It Comes to Cross- functionality



"Community-Led initiatives create an ecosystem where brands and consumers can work together to ensure better products and services. It incentivizes feedback loops and minimizes silos as its foundation is collaborative."

Christina Garnett

Senior Marketing Manager, Offline Community and Advocacy, HubSpot



Community doesn't operate in a vacuum — it has a tangible impact on all teams within your organization. Truly realizing the benefits of Community-Led Growth requires teams to work cross-functionally — which is one of the biggest areas for growth our survey identified.

In most companies, well under half (39%) of other teams participated in their community often, and only slightly more (48%) participated infrequently. We want to see the number of 'infrequently' decrease and 'often' increase! With a better understanding of other team's goals and OKRs, Community teams can come to the table with recommendations on how other teams can best participate in the community and use it to achieve their goals.

Another interesting finding was *how* other teams participate in the community. The data indicates that the more established an organization, the more likely they are to have a product community or a support community. At these more established companies, connecting with members isn't as high a priority — they're mostly there to answer questions and share content. The need or desire to use the community for prospecting also plummets as companies grow. This makes sense, as most of their communities appear to be for existing customers/product users (more on this on p. 20). It also makes it clearer why the Sales team is consistently least likely to understand how the community can benefit or impact their team.

Team participation



PRE-SEED - SERIES A



SERIES B+



IPO



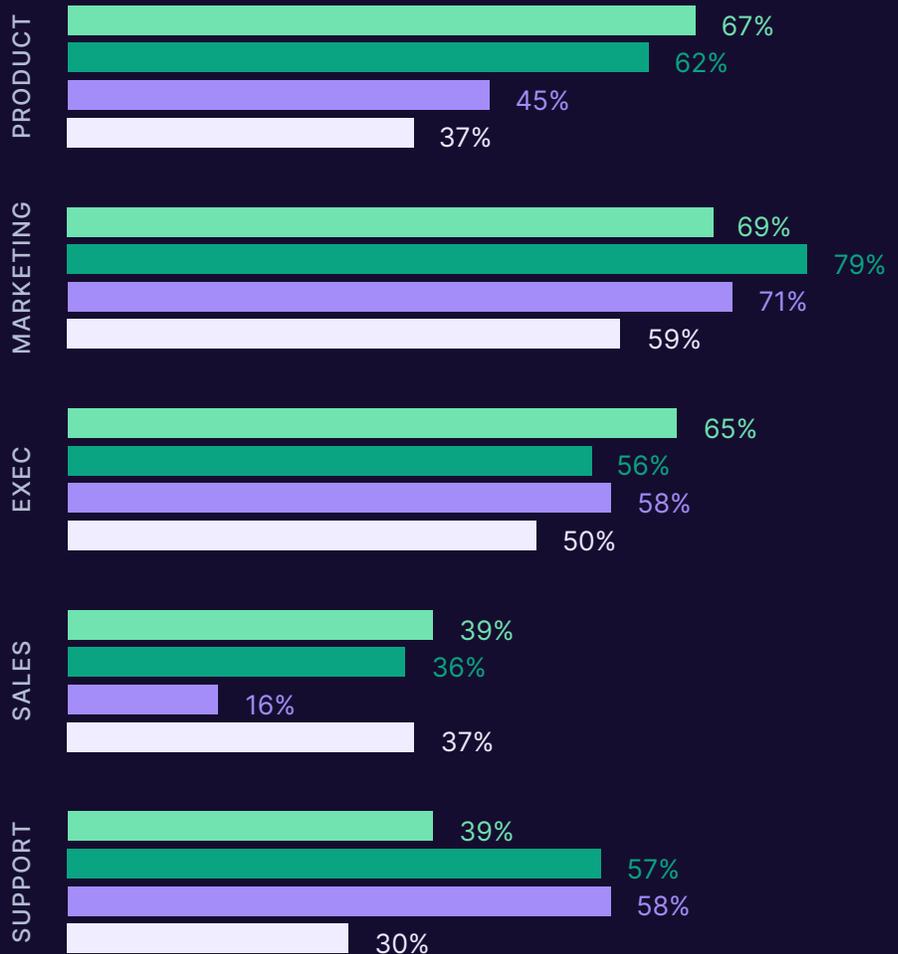
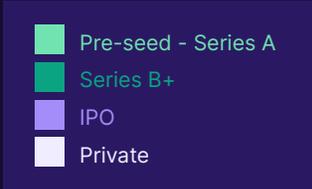
PRIVATE



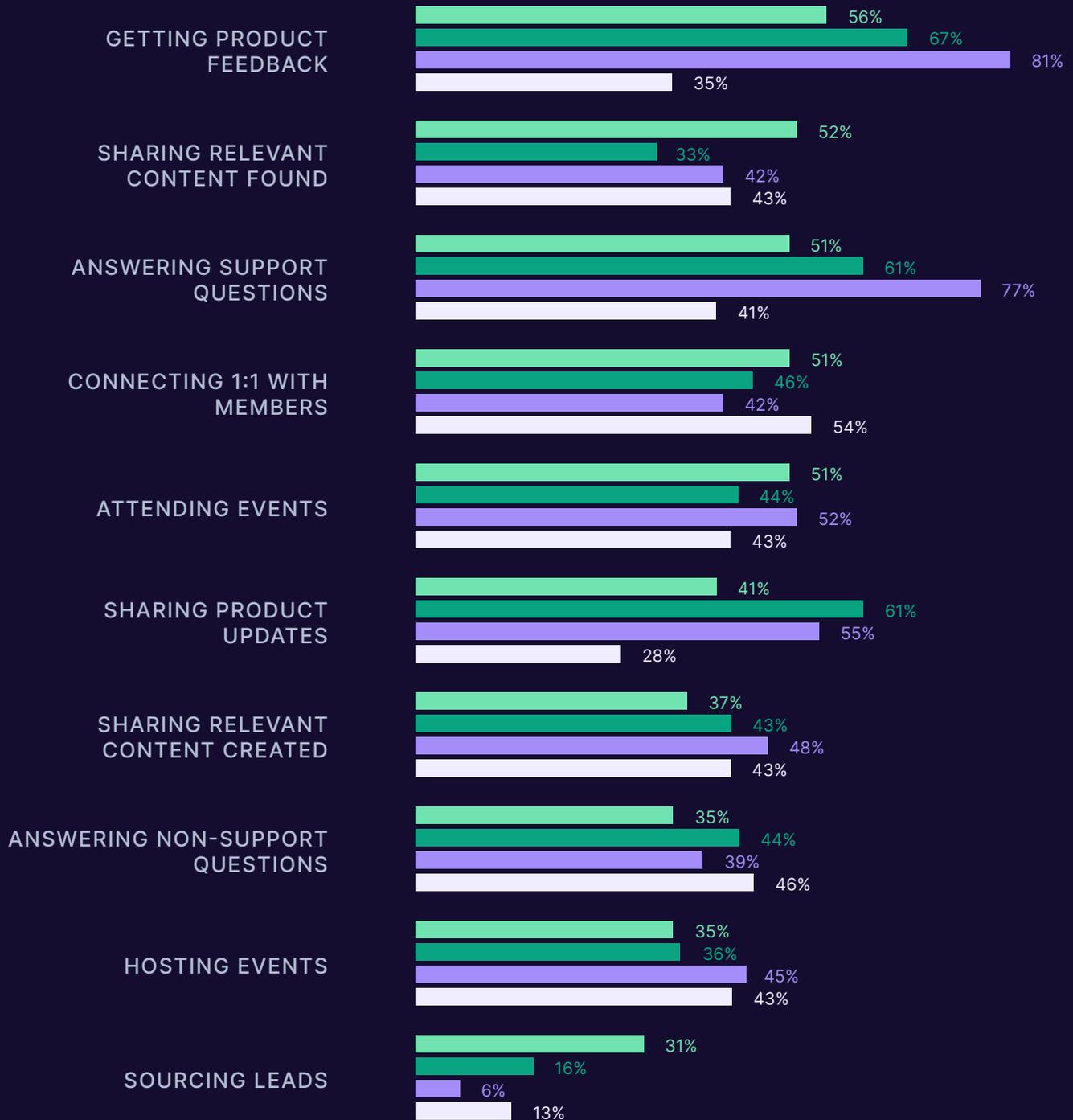
This brings us to which teams are most likely to understand community impact. At larger organizations, it seems that most of the teams that participate in the community are there to talk about product feedback, updates, and support. However, the data also shows that the more established the company is, the less likely the Product team is to understand the impact that the community has on their team.

This also holds true for the Sales team's understanding of how community impacts their team. Even though the dependence on the community for leads decreases at larger companies (where it's more likely that the community is for product or support), the Community team can still create opportunities for Sales to benefit from the community. Can they use the community for persona development to understand who existing customers are and how that impacts retention and the ability to upsell? Can they build relationships with customers that lead to increased trust outside of a typical sales cycle/relationship? Can they get a better feeling for who may be most likely or willing to refer other companies to their product and expedite the sales process?

Departments most likely to understand the impact of community on their team



How other departments participate in the community



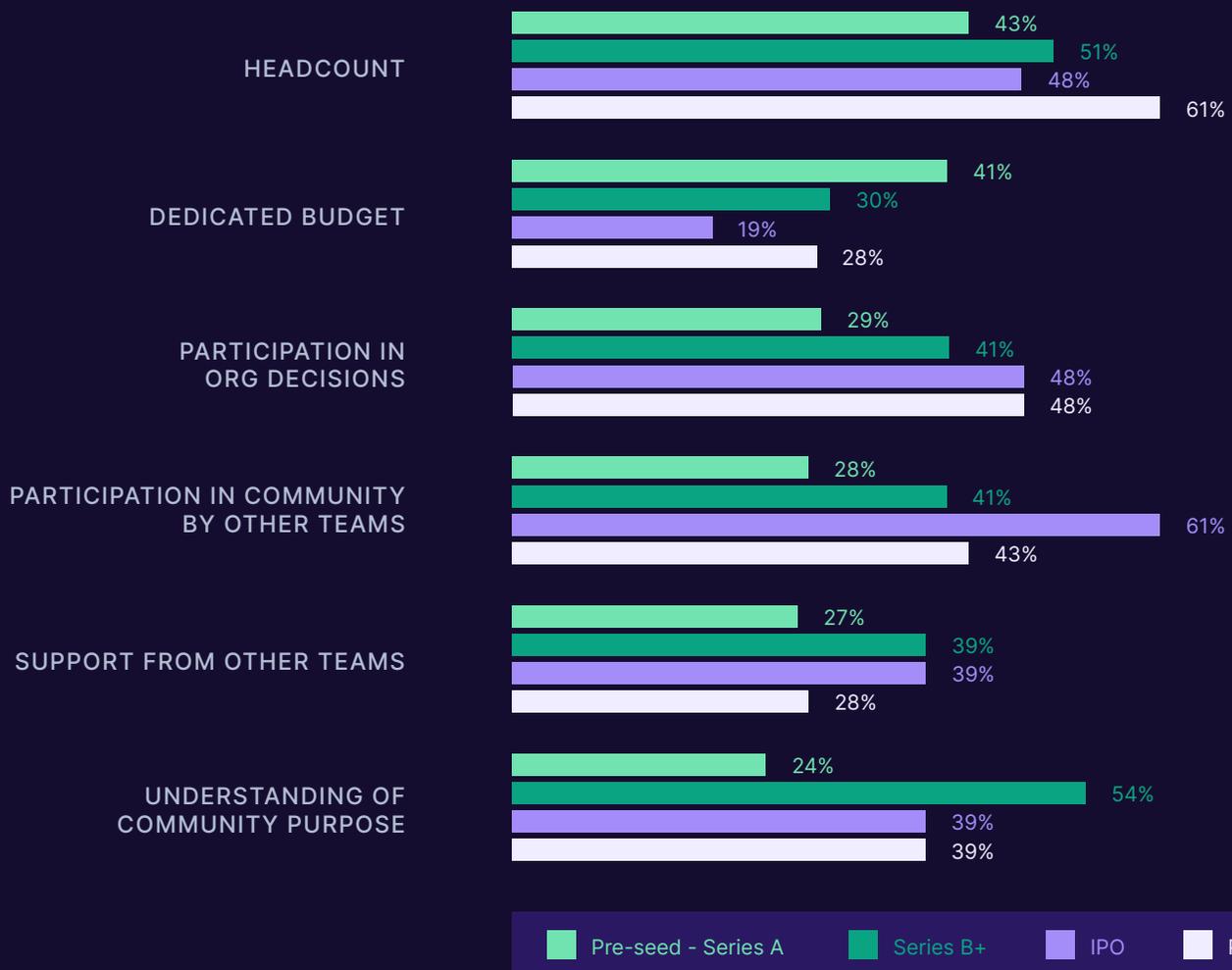
What Community Teams Need in 2022

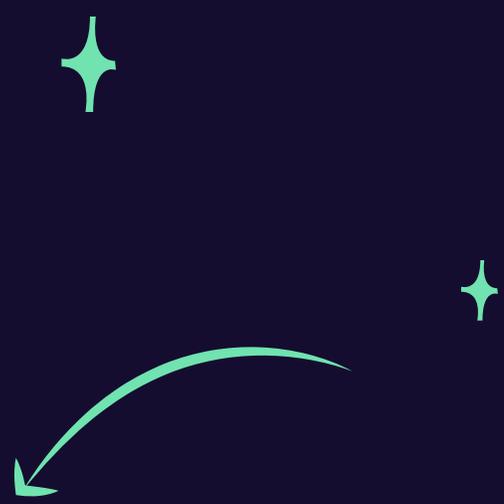
What support do Community teams require in 2022? Numbers varied depending on the company stage. Headcount is slightly less of a priority for teams that have seen steady growth over the past year — companies that hired more than 2-3 Community team members are feeling better about team size. While these organizations will be hiring in 2022, it's not necessarily their biggest concern.

As highlighted elsewhere in the data, Community teams at more established companies want more involvement in organization-wide decisions and other teams to up their participation within the community.

Changes like the ones represented in this graph, even if made incrementally, can be game-changing for companies looking to reap the rewards of a Community-Led approach. As always, our Community-Led Model can be useful in helping organization leadership understand the benefits (head to p. 23 for more detail).

Most desired support in 2022





The Community-Led Growth Model

Being Community-Led means more than just having a community. It requires putting community at the heart of your business, and leaning on that community to map the way forward.

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: **Community-Led companies are the future.**

But being Community-Led means more than just having a community. It requires putting community at the heart of your business, and leaning on that community to map the way forward. When community is done right, it's a thread that runs through and empowers your entire organization.

This begins with recognizing that community doesn't exist within a vacuum. It has tangible benefits for all teams within an organization — but it requires the support and understanding of those other departments for it to truly realize its potential.

To better visualize how community can exist at the core of your organization, we created the Community-Led flywheel, which illustrates the important ways that community works with and impacts other teams.

The Community-Led Model unpacks this flywheel and approach in greater detail, and offers guidance on strategy and team cross-functionality. We've also created the Community-Led Assessment, which will help you evaluate your company, and guide you to resources to help you move your company forward. Visit communityled.com for more.

The flywheel inner circle



Trust

Building trust as a brand or organization requires authentic human connection — and community is the most effective way to do that. Creating that all-important trust starts with nurturing relationships, crafting valuable content, encouraging engagement, and ultimately, creating a safe space in which your community can thrive.

Relationships

Relationships are one of the foundations upon which a healthy community is built. And that's not just the relationship between your organization and your members — the member-to-member relationships help people feel connected, aid in building trust, and keep them engaged.

Engagement

Engagement — your members' interaction with and participation in conversations and community initiatives — is a fire lit by meaningful relationships and content. In turn, it can also help forge stronger relationships and contribute towards quality content, sparking more engagement.

Content

It can be useful to see content as the nutrition of your community — the food you're providing to nourish members and fuel engagement. 'Content' means more than just blog posts and newsletters — it's all that and more, right down to conversation prompts and simple rituals of everyday community management.

The flywheel outer circle



Product

Product Managers and Product teams should always have a customer-centric approach to building product, and where better to interact with your customers than your community? Build with your community, not for it.

Sales

When Sales and Community teams work together, they can create boundaries that maintain trust between members and the company, generating both leads and value for members.

Marketing

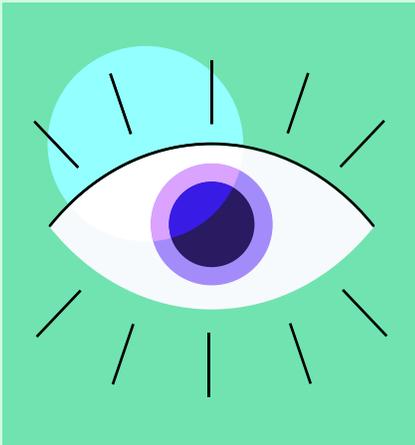
Community and Marketing teams should work in tandem to ensure a cohesive message is being shared across all external communication channels. They can also work together to create content that speaks to the ideal customer, share thought leadership, and elevate and champion community members to foster loyalty.

Support

Support teams can rely on the community to help educate customers, be leading examples for best practices, and reduce the volume of low-level support requests the team handles.

Success

Success differs from Support in that it is proactive, rather than reactive, in nature. Success and Community teams can share resources to help the company better understand the customer's needs and journey, and the impact that has on their retention.



It's time for us to let go of past frustrations. Build bridges. Branch out from the day-to-day and get a better understanding of our companies as a whole.

It's Time to Step into the Future of Community

We've found the data collected for this report so valuable — and encouraging! We're seeing so many positive trends in industry growth, understanding of the Community team's work and impact, and how empowered teams are when it comes to buy-in, budget, and more.

These are great first steps towards enabling Community teams to realize their full value, and to solidify their place as central to business strategy, even if there is significant room for growth in the coming year(s).

To that end, Community teams should make it a priority to work with other teams within their companies to better understand their goals and OKRs, and strategize on how other teams can best leverage the community (without losing their members' trust). This will help more teams become actively involved in the community and increase the likelihood that they'll understand the impact and support future community efforts. The added benefit of understanding other teams' goals is that it will ultimately help Community teams define their own goals.

With this better understanding and support, community can and should become a core part of the company's strategy. When community is elevated to this level, it becomes considerably easier to negotiate fairer salaries that reflect the valuable work the Community team is doing on a daily basis. It also opens the door for Community representation on the leadership team.

2022 is going to be a big one for communities and the Community teams building and supporting them. We need to use this opportunity to show just what can be achieved when there's investment in community and understanding of the impact it can have on the entire organization.

It's time for us to let go of past frustrations. Build bridges. Branch out from the day-to-day and get a better understanding of our companies as a whole. Be creative. Step out of our comfort zone and see what we can do to make community a priority for as many colleagues as possible. With this newfound buy-in, we're setting an example for other Community teams and companies, and can really leave a positive mark on the entire industry.

Glossary

Community

A group of people who come together with a shared purpose: to get help from or connect with others using a product, learn and share knowledge about a skill or profession, or simply connect with others who have a common interest, hobby, or passion.

Community impact

The results of a community roadmap or strategic community efforts with respect to other teams and the company as a whole.

Community-Led

To be Community-Led is to put community at the core of a business, with a focus on connecting people and creating value for both the business and community members in a symbiotic way.

Community-Led Growth

A member-focused growth model that puts community at the core of a business to drive company-wide impact through trust, customer acquisition, retention, and expansion.

Community roadmap

An outline of what is being built and released across your community programs.

Forum

An online 'meeting place' that is used to engage with others, share knowledge, and communicate about a wide range of topics via long-form content or conversations held over an extended period of time.

Initial public offering (IPO) or publicly held

Companies that have 'gone public' and made shares listed and tradeable on a public stock exchange.

Seed/pre-seed

Early-stage companies that have received a small injection of capital to get the business off the ground, usually from family and friends (pre-seed, typically is less than \$500,000*) or external sources (seed — in 2020 the average amount raised in the US for a seed round was \$2 million).

Series A

The level of investment in a start-up that follows initial seed capital. Start-ups that progress to Series A funding rounds usually do so within 22 months. Series A rounds in the US averaged at \$15.6 million in 2020.

Series B

The level of investment that follows Series A funding rounds. Time spent between Series A and Series B rounds usually lasts around 24 months, with an average injection of \$33 million, according to 2020 figures.

Series C

A company's fourth injection of investment capital, usually within 27 months of their Series B round, with an average injection of \$50 million, according to 2020 figures.

OKRs

Objectives and key results — a framework used within companies and teams to set and measure goals.

Privately owned

A company whose shares are not traded on the stock market or offered to the public via an IPO.

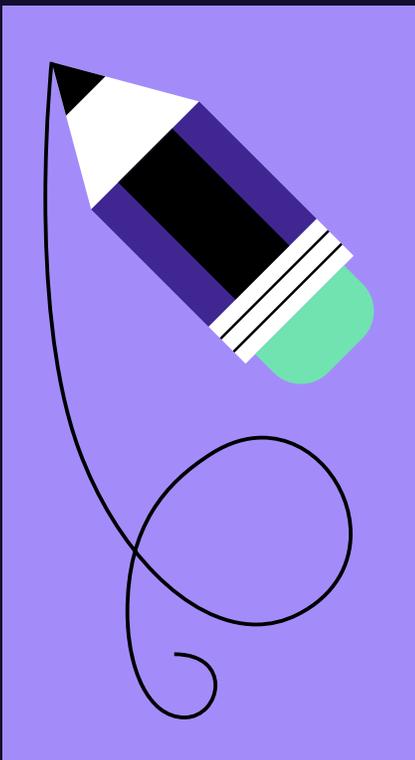
Vanity metrics

Metrics that appear impressive but often don't offer any real valuable insights or help to achieve business goals.

SOURCES

Teal, [Startup Funding Stages Explained for Potential Employees](#)
Fundz, [Series A, B, C Funding: Averages, Investors, Valuations](#)

*Numbers based on US data



A few thank yous

This survey wouldn't have been possible without the support of our own community members and their networks — shoutout to The Community Club! Big props to all of the teams at Commsor for coming together to collaborate on the most important questions to ask. A special thank you to Christina Garnett, Shana Sumers, Vincent Boon, and Brian Oblinger for their insights and thoughts on the importance of building Community-Led companies.

Research
Words
Design
Illustration

Alex Angel
Alex Angel & Kirsti Buick
Sabrina Kopp
Gerhard van Wyk