



KNOWLEDGE HUB

# Community Coffee

Tips for Hosting a Successful Community Coffee

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# What Is a Community Coffee?

A Community Coffee is a planned event within your community management toolkit.

It's purpose is to drive conversation and engagement with your membership and between members and support your community in working towards the communities goals and objectives.

These gatherings can vary in frequency, allowing you to tailor their schedule to the specific needs for the community.

For some communities, it can become a regular fixture in the calendar, fostering interaction and engagement.

However, for other communities, you may adopt a less frequent rhythm, perhaps every few months or intermittently across the year, ensuring flexibility while catering to the demands of the community.

The goal is to have a semi-structured time where members of the community can link up with other members and for community managers to facilitate those connections and interactions among community members.

These short events can take different formats normally through group video calls and can take many forms such as:



## **Members lead focused discussions**

With the focus on hot topic and current work areas topics allowing the sharing of ideas and learning from each other.

## **Challenges and Successes Sharing**

Individuals bring successes and challenges, helping community members solve problems and celebrate together.

## **Task or Challenge Assignments**

Engage participants by working on specific tasks or challenges affecting your subject area to support collaboration and creativity among the community members.

Ultimately, a Community Coffee can serve as a crucial tool for community managers in developing connectivity, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving between the members of the community and helping you as the community manager show the advances toward the community's shared purpose and success.

# Why Are Community Coffees Important?

Here are three benefits you can expect if you add a Community Coffee to your community action plan.

## 1. Build a sense of community

The members of the community may be excellent at the role they perform, but they may often feel that they are on their own rather than part of something bigger. Introducing a community coffee approach can help build a sense of community by bringing together people working in the same field and providing the chance for members to talk to others about the work they are doing.

## 2. Enhancing productivity

Research shows that short breaks for social connection can significantly improve productivity. These moments you can create through your community coffee can help re-energise members and offer new insights and inspiration from others. This means they'll be more focused when they get back to work.



## 3. Positive culture

Community coffee chats provide a platform to reinforce the values and nurture trust among your members. Allowing members to share common experiences unique to their work in a trusted environment and encouraging more members to contribute to the community offline or online.

Despite the casual nature of a Community Coffee, it requires planning if you would like to get the desired results read on to find out how to set up a Community Coffee.

# How to Set Up a Community Coffee?

Despite the casual nature that you as the community managers will pursue when organising a Community Coffee, there are specific steps to consider when setting up these types of events.

Here are three things to consider when planning your community coffee event.

1. It's important to choose a **time slot** for the Community Coffee and send out group message to raise awareness.

Your community members will often have their own schedules, so picking a day and time these will take place is essential. The length of the Community Coffee should be short to begin with, around 30 minutes. If the initial events are successful, you can consider changing the length depending on the format chosen for the community coffee.

2. Choose a suitable **Video Conference Tool**. You want something accessible to everyone. Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Zoom will offer the best chance to interact in a way that is close to face-to-face conversations. Pick what works best for your members. Don't forget to make use of additional features if required, such as virtual whiteboards, breakout rooms and quizzes that help build the connections between your members.



3. Decide on a **topic, subject or challenge** for the event. You can start with ice-breaker questions or quizzes to help drive participation to set the mood for the rest of the event.

It may take a couple of community coffee events to iron out the details of what works well for your community and its members, so do not be put off if the first one does not go as expected.

# 4 Tips & Tricks for Your Next Community Coffee

Here are four tips to help you plan a successful community coffee that delivers the benefits you want for your community.

## 1. Establish ground rules and expectations

While you want the community coffee to be casual and non-stressful, you should make etiquette rules clear. In addition to respectful conversation, attentiveness, and a lack of distractions, you should also consider mentioning the importance of reducing background noise and distracting video backgrounds.

## 2. Prepare an ice-breaker

Members may be unsure about the idea of a community coffee. They may be apprehensive about interacting with other members or unsure of the expectations for the event.

A few icebreaker questions can help set a casual tone and get participants to open up. One option is to ask what they are currently working on. This often leads to other members realising that they have experiences in common with the participants.



## 3. Ask for feedback

You can set aside a few minutes at the end of the community coffee to ask for feedback for future events. Then, you can follow up with a discussion to get further input for the next meeting.

In addition to asking about subjects or activities for future coffee sessions, you can ask about the time of day and frequency of the community coffees.

## 4. Write it up

Probably the most forgotten part of the community coffee is the write-up. Just a summary providing an overview of the event, summarising the key points and takeaways. Links to any relevant content shared and a thank you to those who took part, provides the community with something to look back at. Don't forget AI tools can really help with this and the write up may spark more discussions or even further events based on what happened in the community coffee.

# Consider activities instead of conversation

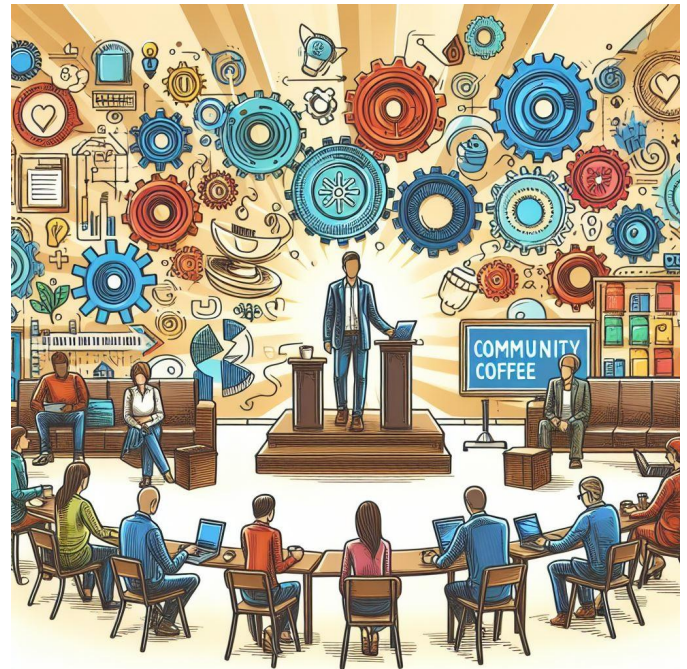
A Community Coffee's versatility allows for engaging activities, amplifying the depth of interaction and collaboration within the community. Consider these three impactful options:

## 1. Scenario Exploration

Provide a hypothetical scenario or real-life case studies and task participants with brainstorming innovative solutions or strategies to tackle these scenarios. Encourage them to think outside the box and propose creative approaches. This activity not only fosters problem-solving skills but also promotes collaboration among members.

## 2. Peer Reviews:

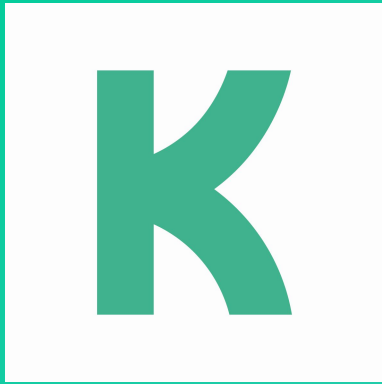
Dedicate time for members to share ongoing challenges or roadblocks they face within their work. Encourage an interactive format where participants break into smaller groups to pool their insights and suggestions. Each subgroup then presents their collective perspectives back to the host and the member who initiated the challenge. This structured peer consulting session fosters a vibrant exchange of knowledge, leveraging diverse viewpoints and collective expertise within the community.



## 3. Smart Failings

Introduce a unique challenge, allowing community members to act as "saboteurs." Instead of seeking solutions to overcome challenges, task them to brainstorm ideas, approaches, or suggestions on how to exacerbate the given challenge. This unconventional approach encourages lateral thinking and creativity by exploring ways to worsen a situation or problem.

Adding a Community Coffee to your community management toolbox not only stimulates discussions between your members and promotes active engagement, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving among community members, it will also help you and your community move towards meeting its purpose and objectives and keep those members coming back to the community.



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