



INTRODUCTORY MODULE:

Digital Community Stewardship

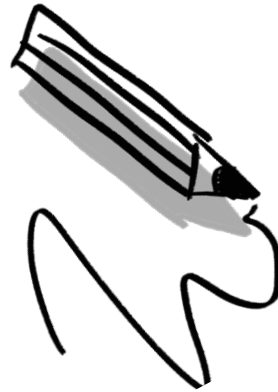
Module Objective: To explore what digital community stewardship means and entails.



Terminology

The descriptions below will describe the difference between three sets of concepts which are mentioned throughout the training.

This training was developed for both moderators and administrators of groups (vs pages) for digital community stewards (vs influencers).



1. MODERATOR VS ADMINISTRATOR

Both Moderators and Administrators are tasked with managing groups. These exact terminology and roles vary from platform to platform. As most social media groups are hosted on Facebook, we use the description by Facebook below.

Moderators: Moderators have the ability to approve or deny posts in the group, remove posts and comments in the group, remove or ban people from the group, and pin or unpin a post.

Administrators: Administrators have the ability to do all the same roles as a moderator. In addition, they are able to manage group settings, remove an admin or moderator, or make another member an admin or moderator.

2. DIGITAL COMMUNITY STEWARDS VS INFLUENCERS

Digital Community Steward: We define 'digital community stewards', as individuals who review user-generated content to ensure members adhere to rules, regulations and community standards of social media platforms. They act, in a sense, as first-line responders who build safe digital experiences within social media groups. This includes admins and moderators of both public and private groups on various social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Instagram, Twitch, Discord, and Clubhouse).

Influencers: Influencers in social media are people who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followers of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views. Brands love social media influencers because they can create trends and encourage their followers to buy the products they promote. (Source: [Influencer Marketing Hub](#))

3. GROUP VS PAGE

This training focuses on Groups (vs Pages). A distinction between the two is elaborated below (Source: [Facebook](#)).

Page:

Pages are generally used as a public marketing tool. Artists, public figures, businesses, brands, organisations and charities often use pages to share information with customers or members. People can “like” the page and follow along but have limited interaction between members.

Group:

Groups are places to communicate shared interests with certain people. You can create a group for anything (they are often based on– shared interests, shared identity, events, and community). Group settings offer more privacy settings than pages and allow moderators and administrators to determine membership and rules. When you join a group on Facebook, you start seeing content from that group in your Feed and are able to contribute to the content shared in the group.

This distinction is important, as this training is focused on online communities, and the structure of a “Group” more closely resembles an in-person “Community” than a “Page.”

What makes a digital community steward?



In a research study conducted by [Governance Lab in 2020](#), where the responses of over 15,000 social media users were surveyed, the following were identified as the three most important traits of a digital leader:

- Welcoming differences of opinion among members
- Being visible and communicating well
- Acting ethically at all times

A question for further reflection: What traits and qualities do you think are necessary for successful and efficient digital leaders?

How do digital community stewards emerge?

Digital leaders, and specifically digital community stewards— are a unique group. Most digital community stewards are neither trained nor paid for the work that they do. This is often a labour of love and an act of service. So, it is important to think back on how your journey started as a digital community steward.

More information about digital leaders, based on research from [Governance Lab](#):

A question for further reflection: How did you become a digital community steward? For what reasons did you decide to take on this task? What keeps you interested in continuing this role?

1. Research shows that many group leaders are accidental leaders. They had little idea of how the leadership of their group would unfold when they took on the role. The job is complex and time-consuming and can impose intense pressures for which many leaders are not trained or prepared. For all the focus on leadership in contemporary society, online leadership is an emerging phenomenon that has not yet been well studied or understood.
2. When asked why they lead a group on Facebook, many group leaders said that their main reason for operating on the platform was the extraordinary global reach of Facebook and the fact that the platform and its tools were accessible, easy to use, and free of charge. Many leaders we interviewed also said that they derived significant personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement from their work.

