

MODULE TWO:

Trust and Connection

Module Objective: Identify strategies to build trust and connection within the group to encourage better interaction among members

Module Dilemma: There is no real trust or connection in the way my group members interact with each other



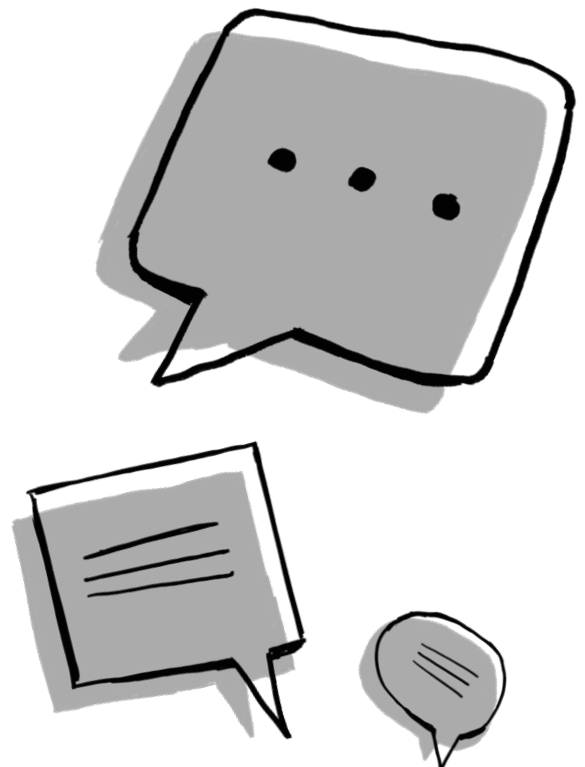
Building trust

UNDERSTANDING TRUST IN DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

It is not enough that the members share information, post regularly, and connect with the objective of the group. They must connect with each other. There need to be interpersonal relationships within the group.

- People can experience a strong sense of community from membership in such groups despite the lack of physical proximity.
- Online groups are a still fluid form of human organisation that in many cases attract members and leaders who are marginalised in the physical societies they inhabit, and who use the platform to build new kinds of community they could not form in real space.
- Many of these groups have counter-cultural norms. These groups cut across traditional social groupings and bring together people normally divided by geography around a shared trait or interest.
- The flexible affordances of online platforms have enabled new kinds of leaders to emerge in these groups with unique skills in moderating often divisive dialogues, sometimes among millions of members.
- The leaders of many of these groups run them as a labour of love; they are neither trained nor paid, the rules that govern their internal operations are often uncoded, and the hosting platform - in this case, Facebook - holds significant power over their operations and future.

Note: The above findings were taken from a research [report by The Governance Lab](#) (2020), which interviewed leaders of 50 Facebook groups and 26 global academic and industry experts for this study of the governance and leadership of Facebook groups.



BUILDING TRUST IN DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

PILLAR 1: TRANSPARENCY

Transparency and plain talk are imperative to build trust within digital communities. The maximisation of transparency translates to authentic community stewards who constantly keep the members updated about the purpose, objectives, and health of the group. The following are a few strategies through which we can achieve the first pillar of trust:

- Being clear and transparent about the objectives and boundaries of the group
- Reiterating the community standards of the platform and repercussions for breaking them

PILLAR 2: RESPONSIBILITY

This refers to making ethical decisions and safeguarding the welfare and dignity of the members. Any online platform is only as ethical as its creators and users. This means as leaders of these online groups, digital community stewards have the responsibility to promote fairness and well-being among interactions within the group.

- The following are a few strategies through which we can achieve the second pillar of trust:
- Ironing out complaints in a sensitive and timely manner
- Stopping misinformation in its tracks





PILLAR 3: PRIVACY

All members of the group have access to the information shared within the group. So, the group must acknowledge the preferences of the users regarding what information can be collected, shared, and saved. Consent must be valued and respected at all times.

The following are a few strategies through which we can achieve the third pillar of trust:

- Inform members about boundaries for sharing private information, highlighting the need to practise filtering personally identifiable information
- Setting clear standards and regulations regarding access, control, and sharing of information within the group

PILLAR 4: SECURITY

This requires digital community stewards to inform the members about the need for digital hygiene – both within the group and outside of the group. Heightened awareness of cyber risks and violations of digital rights will contribute to developing trust and reliability within an online community.

The following are a few strategies through which we can achieve the fourth pillar of trust:

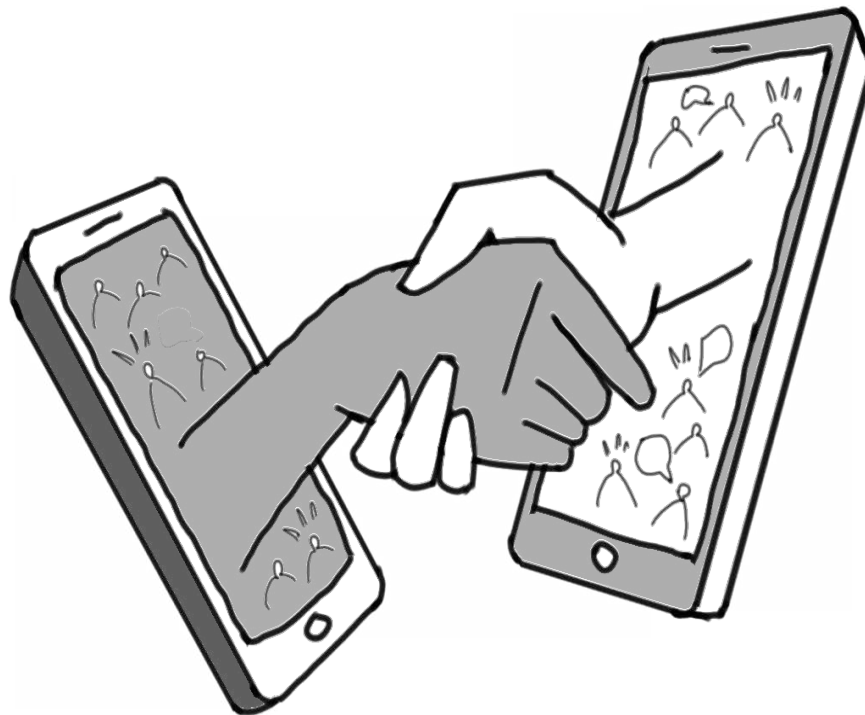
- Be mindful of common cyber risks and digital threats to digital communities.
- Promote and practise basic digital safety practices within the group.

Note: The above information on digital trust was obtained and adopted through resources from [Deloitte Insights](#).



Building Connection

UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVITY AND EXCLUSION



WHAT IS INCLUSIVITY?

Inclusivity is about welcoming, developing, and advancing a diverse mix of individuals. It's about making all people feel valued, including changing practices that might unfairly benefit any one group and making sure that everyone feels they have the same opportunity to advance and make an impact.

WHAT IS DIGITAL INCLUSION?

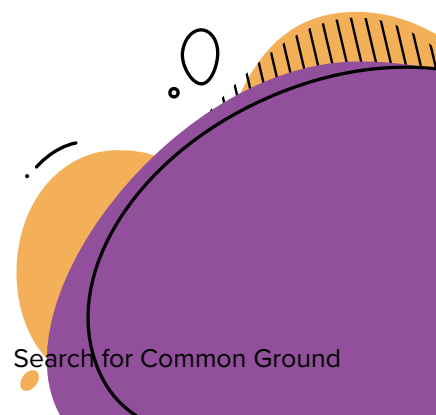
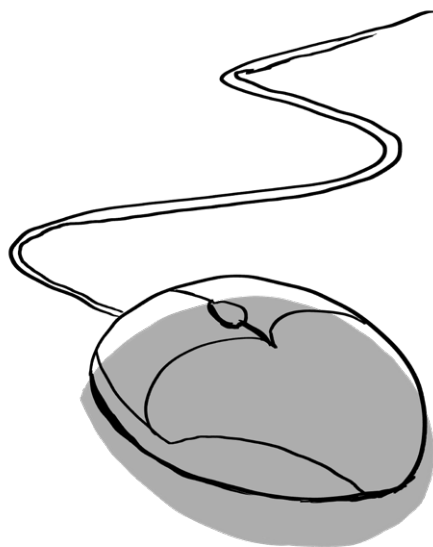
The following are some key components of digital inclusion:

1. Affordable, robust broadband internet service
2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
3. Access to digital literacy training
4. Applications and online content are designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

BUILDING EMPATHY AND INCLUSIVITY IN DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

The following are some ways digital communities can take specific measures to make marginalised and vulnerable groups feel welcome and included in online communities.

- **Remember community standards** – Most digital platforms have community standards that are designed and practised to protect the safety and welfare of its users. Since your group is hosted on such a platform, the members must be reminded that discrimination and harassment within the group would violate the community standards. Therefore, all members are expected to practise empathy and inclusivity at all times.
- **Reaffirm through your group rules** – Most groups, as we will see soon, will follow the rules. It is important for community stewards to reiterate the importance of inclusivity and empathy through these rules. This shows members that these values are not simply practised due to the necessity to follow the community standards established by the organisation. But also because the group values diversity, inclusion, and equity for all.
- **Celebrate diversity** – Many social media groups make celebratory posts for big holidays. This practice should not be restricted to majority communities. For instance, if a group has members of diverse religions, posting a celebratory message only on Christmas is not enough. Similarly, depending on the group and context, key celebrations of diverse communities, such as International Day for People with Disabilities and the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, should also be acknowledged and celebrated.
- **Promote image descriptions** – Alternative text can be attached to images so that when a screen reader encounters an image, it reads out the text to the end-user rather than just skipping over it. If you are using text in images, say as a header or banner, the end-user is missing out on that key information. Images on social media are becoming more accessible too, and the ability for end-users to add alt-text is now available on most platforms (like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). Where this function is not available, the best practice is to provide an Image description at the bottom of your post.



Setting up community guidelines

A core strategy for building trust and promoting connections is to practise empathy and inclusivity in our digital communities is to have clear, well-defined, and uncompromisable guidelines that will protect the members of the groups – including those who are marginalised and made vulnerable online.



DEVELOPING REGULATIONS FOR DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

The following are some focus areas you can focus on to develop the community regulations:

- Transparency
- Privacy
- Accessibility
- Safety & Safeguarding
- Non-discrimination & Inclusivity

The following are some guiding notes and recommendations you can utilise to develop the community regulations:

- Think of the best way to present these rules: Bullet points, Dos and Don'ts
- Outline and reiterate the purpose of the group
- Be clear about core group values
- Be clear about your moderation policy
- In addition to stating what is not allowed, explain what is welcomed and encouraged.
- Reflect on the overall community standards of the platform
- Consider if there are any legal restrictions or regulations preventing members from commenting on certain topics.

The following is one such sample set of community guidelines for reference. Note that these need to be further fleshed out and developed according to context and requirements.

- Be respectful of others and their opinions.
- Do not make personal attacks in your comments.
- Do not post content that is discriminatory, obscene, inflammatory, harassing, hateful, threatening, profane or personally abusive.
- Do not post anything that could be libellous or defamatory: if an accusation is made against a named person, for example, a member of the group, we will hide it.
- Do not post content with explicit or technical detail about self-harm or suicide.
- Do not post adverts for commercial products or services.
- Do not repeatedly post about issues that are off topic, i.e., spam.

Some other resources and templates for social media guidelines of various organisations:

[Social Media Guidelines – Community First Development](#)

[Social Media Community Guidelines – Fresh Visions](#)

[Social Media Guidelines and House Rules Template](#)

FINALISING REGULATIONS FOR DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

The following are some suggestions for the digital community stewards to be mindful of when reviewing and further developing the set of guidelines:

- Contextualize and prioritise the guidelines according to the experiences and requirements of your group
- Include group members in the finalisation process. Listen to their suggestions and opinions on the draft guidelines. This is important to promote inclusivity.
- Think about how you are going to hold breaches and violations of these guidelines. Reflect on accountability.
- Decide how often these guidelines need to be reviewed and updated and decide who will be responsible for this process.
- Ensure these guidelines are available in the local languages and/or commonly spoken languages within the group.
- Remember to practice – not just preach. Lead by example.
- Consider accessibility and where these regulations will be hosted – about section, pinned post, external link, etc.

