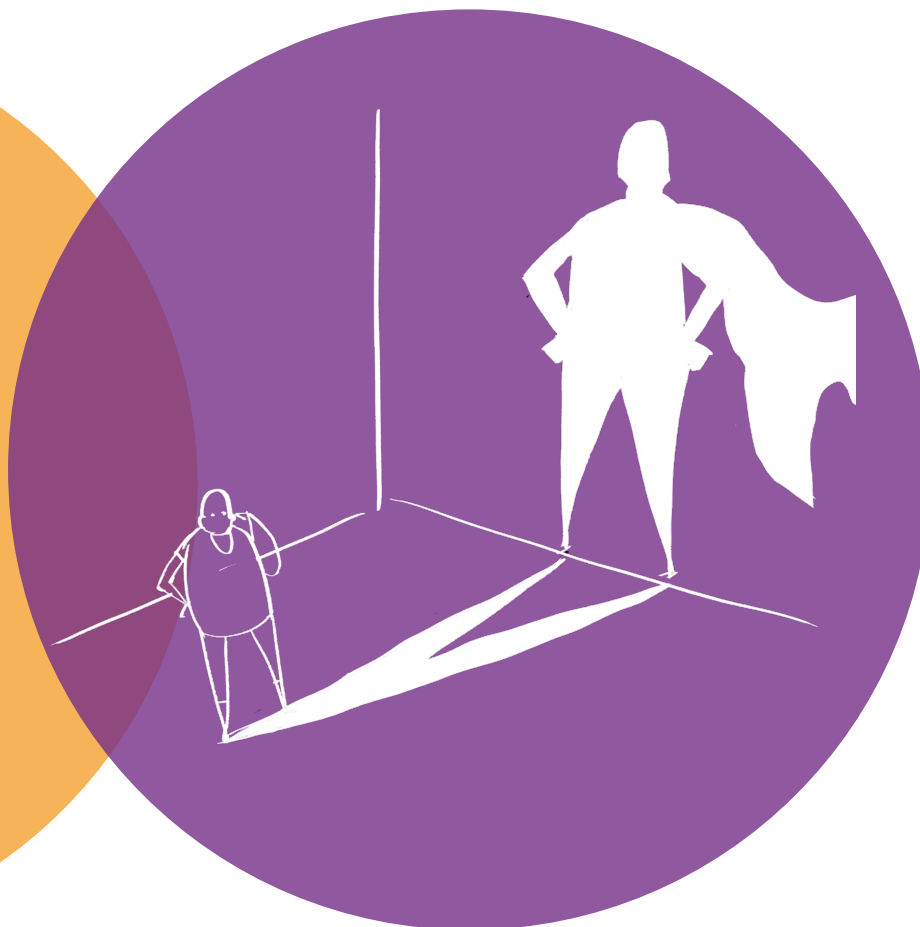


MODULE SEVEN:

# Digital Leadership

**Module Objective:** Understand how to exercise multi-partiality and practice leadership in digital environments

**Module Dilemma:** I don't have the leadership skills and confidence to facilitate my group



# Who is a Digital Community Steward - An Exploration

## HOW DO DIGITAL COMMUNITY STEWARDS EMERGE?

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.



## 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 in a leader:

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

# How to be an Efficient and Effective Digital Community Steward - Key Strategies

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## CHOOSE MULTI-PARTIALITY OVER IMPARTIALITY.

Multi-partiality—developed as a facilitation technique—seeks to level power disparities between individuals by acknowledging the social identities and inequities present within a space. It asks participants to consider how their perspectives are influenced by their social identities, and how these identities influence group dynamics; this can look like facilitators naming who seems to feel most comfortable contributing to the conversation or what perspectives are missing from the

space. It also creates room for facilitators to share their own identities and experiences, something that is often deemed inappropriate in schools.

Overall, multi-partiality falls between impartiality and bias; it does not favour one opinion over another, nor does it completely remove the facilitator from the conversation.

## DON'T JUST FACILITATE. REMEMBER TO PARTICIPATE.

Members appreciate it when you are involved as a fellow member of the group, not just as an admin. Being social and interacting with members lets them get to know you and helps build trust. Once you have established this trust, it's easier for members to feel comfortable coming to you with any questions or participating in the group themselves.

As an active admin, you can help encourage a positive group culture by modelling the type of behaviour you want to see in the group. Experienced admins tell us that being active also allows you to notice positive and negative trends in the group. If you notice group members reacting positively to a post, you may want to encourage more of the same.

Admins tell us members like to be recognized, even if it's just with a like or a short comment. Give members positive feedback by actively commenting and reacting to their posts. Acknowledge members and let them know you care.

Posting regularly once or twice a week (or more) lets your members get to know you. Depending on the platform you moderate, consider scheduling posts in advance so you don't need to be online around the clock.



# How to be an efficient and effective digital community steward

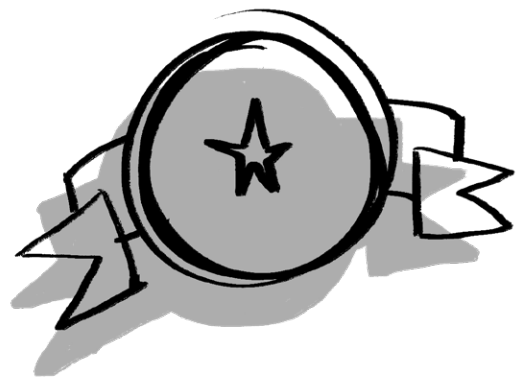
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## RELY ON YOUR TEAM FOR HELP

Appoint moderators or admins so that each person can take a day off whenever they're feeling overwhelmed or a little stressed out.

Experienced admins tell us running a successful group takes time and effort. Communities can break apart when an admin becomes drained. When you feel overwhelmed, turn to your team members for help. Set up a schedule, divide responsibilities, and include days off for yourself and your team members. Trust your team to step in when you need to take a break.

Spend time training your team both to help manage the group and uphold the group's culture. Feeling comfortable with your team's decision-making abilities and commitment allows you to take needed breaks from your group.



## FIND MODERATORS AND ADMINS

As your community grows, you may find yourself spending more and more time moderating your group. If you feel this way, you're not alone. It may be time to enlist some people to help manage your group.

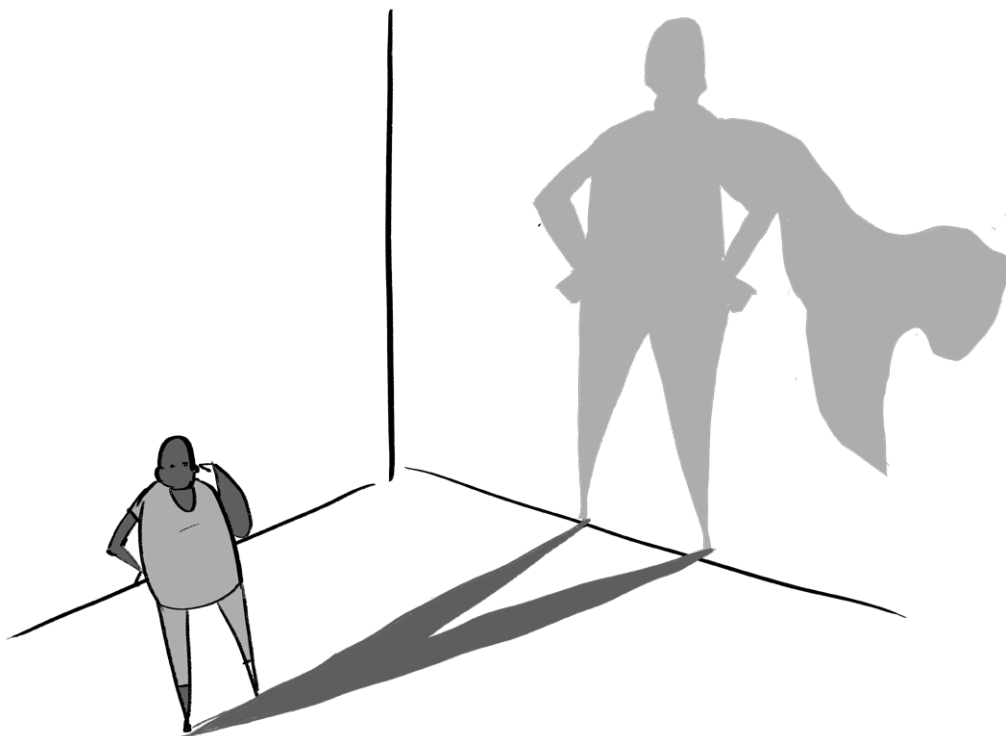
You may find that certain members already help manage the group. Those members might post great content, comment on other posts or tag you in discussions that need moderation. They understand the culture of the group and feel like a part of the community. Admins we spoke to told us that the best moderators tend to reveal themselves in this manner, so reach out to them and see if they want to take on a more official role.

You can promote any member of your group to one of two roles: admin or moderator. Moderators have fewer permissions than admins, so they can help take some of the work off your plate without giving them more control than you're comfortable with.

Introduce new moderators or admins in a post, so members can get to know them personally and know who to tag in comment threads that need moderation. Also - admin and moderator badges help members quickly and easily identify these leaders. Ideally, your moderators can monitor content and member activity while you're away from your group.

# How to be an Efficient and Effective Digital Community Steward - Rely on your Team

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## UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED

Do you ever feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders and that all you can think about is putting out fires in your group? It can actually be exciting to rise to that challenge, but that's also when you can start to burn out. Learn to recognise burnout and when you feel it, know when to take a break.

There are many apps that can help us keep track of our moods and emotions. Mood Meter is one such app you can look into.

## WALK AWAY

When you feel anger, or tension or are consistently drawn back into a problem, the first thing you can do is get up, walk away and turn off your notifications. Give yourself some time to disconnect and take a step back. It might be hard to walk away from a problem when it feels like you're the only one who can solve it but looking after yourself is always worth it. The stress can wait.

## IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS SENSITIVITIES

Notice the pattern. Do you feel overwhelmed with member requests? Are members messaging you? Are you dealing with conflict in your group?

Learn your triggers, sit with them and process them. You may be able to see a clear source behind your anxious or uneasy feelings. Identify which tasks you might need more help dealing with as well as which issues you may want to avoid entirely.

## SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS ABOUT YOUR AVAILABILITY

Do a Live with your group or have a pinned message to set expectations and limitations. This helps build empathy with your community and models behaviour for your own admin team.

Schedule your posts in advance to make your time off count.

Create office hours that work for you and your team. No one should be expected to be on 24/7.

**PRACTICE SELF-CARE**

When you feel yourself getting overwhelmed, think about the small things you can do to care for yourself. Maybe it's making yourself a cup of tea, going for a walk, playing with your pet or calling a friend. Sometimes it's the little things that comfort you and that can help you to let go of what's stressing you out. Getting offline is usually a great first step.

**BUILD A TRUSTWORTHY TEAM WITH SKILLS AND SENSITIVITIES THAT COMPLEMENT YOURS**

Empower your team to make decisions on your behalf. Consider an admin team located in different locales for better coverage day and night. When choosing team members, think about what they can do that you can't. Having a strong network of skills and specialities will help you to distribute responsibilities and save your team from burnout.

