## H.2   Online Panel: Building Communities of Community Builders – An International Perspective

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The field community management has been growing steadily over the past years. It has become a central pillar of many digital transformation initiatives. The rise of the discipline has been accompanied and driven by a number of professional organizations – usually on a national level. While these professional organizations often have significant impact locally, what has been lacking to date is an international forum, in which their overarching goals and approaches, core activities as well as their impact can be compared and contrasted. The goal of this panel is to create such a forum, inviting key international stakeholders to reflect on their work and inspiring the work of others.

## 1   Building Communities of Community Builders

With the rise of web 2.0 and the social web, we have witnessed a stark increase in online interactions. Social media platforms have thrived over the past decades, building on user-generated content and the social interactions they made possible. Yet while the platforms provide a virtual space for people to interact, or a space for weak ties to be created, a central question remained and became even more important over time: How can online communities be built and managed? In essence, the community aspect highlights the shared conviction, shared identity or shared purpose that binds community members to each other (Sproull & Arriaga, 2007). In other words, community management is about creating cohesion in groups and developing strong(er) ties between different stakeholders in a network.

A whole discipline has since developed around the field of online community management, which is both researched intensively (Kraut & Resnick, 2012; Harhoff & Lakhani, 2016) and receives significant attention by practitioners (Bussgang & Bacon, 2020; Happe, 2021; Spinks, 2021). A new breed of companies – with community at their core – may be called community-centric organizations.

Over the years, the community space has become highly fragmented. We see communities being employed as customer communities in the field of marketing, as innovation communities in the context of innovation management or as corporate communities, often called enterprise social networks, used internally to connect employees – to name just a few examples. Numerous software applications have been developed to cater to the needs of these different organizational stakeholders. Given the growth and complexity of the field, it is no surprise that professional organizations, or communities of practice for community builders, have been formed, usually on a local or national level. What has been lacking to date is an international forum in which key stakeholders of the community industry can join forces, compare their goals and approaches, core activities as well as their impact and, in doing so, inspire the work of others.

In this panel, leaders of five professional community organizations will meet, namely Rachael Happe, Principal & Founder of *The Community Roundtable* (United States), Tanja Laub, Chairwoman of the *Bundesverband Community Management* (Germany), Venessa Paech, Cofounder of the *Australian Community Managers* (Australia), David Spinks, Cofounder of *CMX* (United States) and Kirsten Wagenaar, Cofounder and Managing Director of *Bind* (The Netherlands). The panel will be moderated by David Wagner, Professor at Munich Business School and Head of the Research Committee at the *Bundesverband Community Management* (Germany).

Each of the participants has also worked extensively on providing educational materials and guidance for the community industry. Rachel Happe, for example, has published *The State of Community Management Report*, an annual account of the community industry, for more than a decade (see Happe, 2021 for the latest version). Kirsten Wagenaar has co-authored a book titled *Organising Communities* (Staal & Wagenaar, 2019). David Spinks just recently launched his new book titled *The Business of Belonging: How to Make Community your Competitive Advantage* (Spinks, 2021). Tanja Laub has repeatedly co-authored the studies published by the *Bundesverband Community Management* (see Clauss et al., 2019; Clauss et al. 2020 for the latest pieces). Venessa Paech is researching artificial intelligence in the context of online communities for her PhD at the University of Sydney (e.g. Trott et al., 2020). David Wagner has written multiple research papers and textbook chapters on the topic (e.g. Wagner et al., 2017; Wagner 2021).

## 1.1 Guiding Questions

During the panel discussion, the following questions shall be addressed:

- Why did you start a professional organization?
- What are the main goals of the professional organization?
- What are the main activities of the professional organization?
- How exactly does each professional organization contribute to the professionalization of the industry?
- How is community management done for community builders?
- What has been the impact of the professional organization on the discipline to date?
- How do the professional organizations differ?
- What are pressing issues and areas for future work? Where do you think the profession is headed (in the next 5–10 years)?

## 1.2 Format

This session will be offered as an open online panel discussion. Contributors and participants of the panel will meet in a video conference (MS Teams). The panel will be open to participants beyond the GeNeMe Conference, thus making it a public event. The panel consists of four subject matter experts and a moderator, who will guide the discussion. Short bios and publications from panel members are provided below. The main discussion will be recorded.

## 1.3 Structure

The online panel will take 90 minutes and will proceed as follows:

- Welcome and introduction
- Introduction of panel members
- Moderated discussion
- Open discussion (from GeNeMe and other participants)
- Closing round
- Wrap-up and summary

## 1.4  Participants and Roles

**Rachel Happe/Panelist:** Rachel works at the intersection of technology, governance, leadership and communications. She cofounded The Community Roundtable in 2009 to document the value of communities and community management. Recently, she started Engaged Organizations to apply what she learned about communities to organizational governance and management.  She has published groundbreaking research on the use of social and community technologies. Her clients have included BASF, City Year, AAAS, EA, Microsoft, Hilti, and the World Bank Group. Rachel has over twenty-five years of experience working with emerging technologies and has served as a product executive at Mzinga, Bitpass, & IDe, and as IDC's first market analyst covering social technologies. Rachel's writing has been published in Harvard Business Review, CMSWire, and Information Week.

Profile: https://engagedorgs.com/expertise/

**Tanja Laub/Panelist:** Tanja is Chairwoman of the Bundesverband Community Management – Für digitale Kommunikation und Social Media (BVCM), an association for social media and community professionals in the German-speaking region. Next to her involvement on the executive board, she has also been a member of the research team producing the BVCM studies. Since 2006, Tanja has been working in the field of community management and later also in the field of social media. In 2010, she set up her own business as a freelance consultant. Her focus is on building company-owned platforms and advising companies on how to better communicate digitally with their customers and prospects.

Profile: https://www.bvcm.org/bvcm/bvcm-vorstand/tanja-laub/

**Venessa Paech/Panelist:** Venessa is Australia's leading expert in online communities and community management. She has led community for Lonely Planet, REA Group, Envato and Australia Post, and her private clients include: ABC, AASW, Teach for Australia, QUT, University of Sydney, SANE and Woolworths. Venessa is Co-Founder and Director of Australian Community Managers (ACM), the national centre of excellence for online community management training and resources. She teaches online community management for post-graduates at the University of Sydney and she is the resident Community expert for the Future Work Skills Academy. Venessa is a published academic, and a PhD Candidate researching AI and online communities.

Profile: https://www.venessapaech.com/about-venessa

**David Spinks/Panelist:** David is the Founder of *CMX* (cmxhub.com), a large and passionate network for community professionals. Thousands of community professionals come to CMX for support and education in community strategy. The community industry's largest event, CMX Summit, brings together thousands of attendees each year, and 50+ local CMX Connect chapters gather regularly around the world. In 2019, CMX was acquired by Bevy (Bevy.com) where David serves as the VP of Community. David is a 3x startup founder, an experienced community leader, and has personally advised and trained hundreds of organizations in community strategy over the past decade.

Profile: https://cmxhub.com/about/

**Kirsten Wagenaar/Panelist:** Kirsten is co-founder and managing director of the community building agency Bind, founded in 2017 (www.bind.nl). Even before Bind, Kirsten has been consulting hundreds of organizations on the development of on- and offline communities for various target groups. Bind's mission is to professionalize community building within and around organizations and make them future proof. All six team members are experienced and passionate community builders, as well as talented consultants. Together with the team, and co-founder Peter Staal, Kirsten regularly develops educational material on the topic of community. With Peter she also wrote the book 'Organising Communities' in 2019.

Profile: https://www.bind.nl/en/about-us/

**David Wagner/Moderator:** David Wagner is Professor of International Business and Digital Business at Munich Business School and Academic Director of the Doctor in Business Administration (DBA). Next to his academic role, he is Associate Director at MUUUH! Next and heads the Research Committee of the German Association for Community Management (BCVM). David teaches, does research, and consults in the fields of digital business, transformation, and communication, specifically around social media and online communities. He has authored numerous journal articles, conference papers and book chapters.

Profile: https://kpsquared.org/about-prof-dr-david-wagner/

Interactive

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