




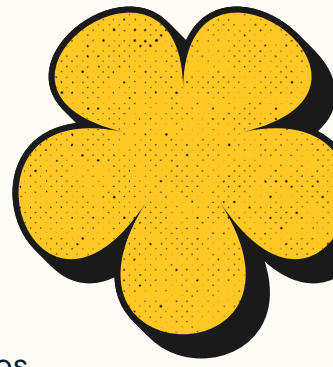
The 2025

CMX Community Industry Trends Report

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From the Editor



The community industry is in a bit of a crunch. Teams are leaner. Budgets have taken a hit. And the pressure to prove value is as intense as ever. But if this year's data shows us anything, it's that community pros are still finding a way forward—with creativity, resilience, and a deep belief in the power of this work.

17% of respondents told us they don't have anyone working full time on community. That's the highest number we've ever seen. At the same time, community is showing up across more departments—especially in customer success, marketing, and product. The work is expanding. The teams... not so much.

Budget frustrations are higher than ever. Many community pros are being asked to scale impact with fewer resources, and ROI is still the number one challenge. And yet most people still believe in this work. 83% say community is core to their company's mission. Most plan to stay in the industry. That's not nothing.

AI showed up in a big way again this year. 81% of respondents are using it already (mostly for content, reporting, and moderation), and 92% are excited to learn more. Of course, not everyone's sold—but the overwhelming feeling is curiosity and optimism. AI isn't replacing communities. It seems to be helping us protect, scale, and advocate for them.

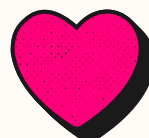
This year, I wanted to do more than just present the numbers. So throughout the report, you'll see little "What we're seeing here" callouts—these are moments I thought were worth pausing on. They highlight interesting shifts, emerging patterns, or just things I think you should know.

We also saw some bright spots this year. Fewer pros are struggling with member engagement—a challenge that used to top the list. In-person events are making a real comeback. Community-led chapters are growing and gaining momentum. And my personal favorite? Seven people said they don't have any frustrations about their community. That's the dream. The work is evolving. So are the strategies.

This report doesn't sugarcoat anything. Community teams are stretched thin. Budgets are tight. The path forward isn't always clear. But it also shines a light on the industry I love—one that's full of grit, care, and creativity. Community pros are still showing up. Still building. Still finding new ways to make this work matter. And that continues to give me hope.



Beth McIntyre
Director of Community
Bevy/CMX



Key Takeaways

01

Community budgets are split and clarity is lacking

Only 26% of respondents saw budget increases this year, while 18% faced cuts. But a full quarter said they didn't know how their budget changed—pointing to persistent opacity, even for those expected to have visibility.



02

More community pros are going solo.

The share of freelancers and consultants continues to rise, and nearly 1 in 5 teams report having no full-time community staff. Meanwhile, roles are narrowing as teams shed responsibilities and make sharper trade-offs.



03

Engagement is back—but resourcing isn't.

Fewer pros say member engagement is a top frustration, and in-person events are making a real comeback. Still, the most common team size remains just 2–5 people, and many feel stretched thin.



04

Connecting data is the key to proving impact.

Teams with CRM-integrated community data are over twice as likely to rate their impact as 'extremely successful'—suggesting that integration helps teams use their data more effectively. It's not just having data—it's what you do with it.



05

AI adoption is up and curiosity still leads.

81% of respondents say they're already using AI tools, mostly for content creation, reporting, and moderation. Despite some skepticism, the prevailing sentiment is one of cautious optimism.



06

Strong belief, limited support

85% of community professionals say community is core to their company's mission, and most want to stay in the field. But with flat budgets and limited growth paths, long-term commitment may depend on stronger investment.





Table of Contents



About this Report

05

Methodology, Respondent Snapshot,
Demographics, Company Breakdown,
Industry



Community Programs

13

Members and Member Contribution
Asynchronous programming
Synchronous programming



Community Teams

23

Team Organization
Impact and Interest



The Business of Community

31

Business Objectives
Quantifying Community Value
Measuring Community Health



Community Budget Trends

40

State of Community Budgets
Budget Challenges
Advice from Community Professionals



The Community Professional

47

Layoffs and Job Security
Job Satisfaction
Frustrations



Community and Technology

52

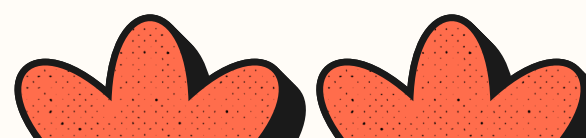
Community Tech Stacks
Artificial Intelligence



What Comes Next

59

Support from CMX
Acknowledgements





About this Report

Methodology

The 2025 CMX Community Industry Trends Report shares findings from a survey of 589 community professionals who completed our online survey between May 1 and June 22, 2025.

To collect responses for this report, we used multiple avenues:

- Outreach from our partnered organizations (pg. 46)
- Outreach from partnered individuals in the industry (pg. 46)
- We shared the survey across the CMX community in our Bevy Discussions, Slack, and email list.

This year's respondents reflect the growing complexity and flexibility of community roles. 59% said they work on community full-time for an organization, while 20% include community as part of a broader role. Another 15% identified as consultants or freelancers—marking a steady rise in independent community work, as more professionals carve out flexible, self-directed careers in the space.

Technology still leads as the top-reported industry (44%), but we're seeing community roles take root across more sectors than ever before—including healthcare, professional services, nonprofit, finance, and education. The share of respondents selecting "other" industries also grew, showing that community continues to expand beyond its traditional tech roots.

We retained many questions from previous years to track long-term trends in how community is structured, resourced, and valued. We also introduced new questions around budgets. At the same time, we chose to remove salary data from this year's report. With such a global and diverse respondent pool, the numbers didn't paint a clear or representative picture.

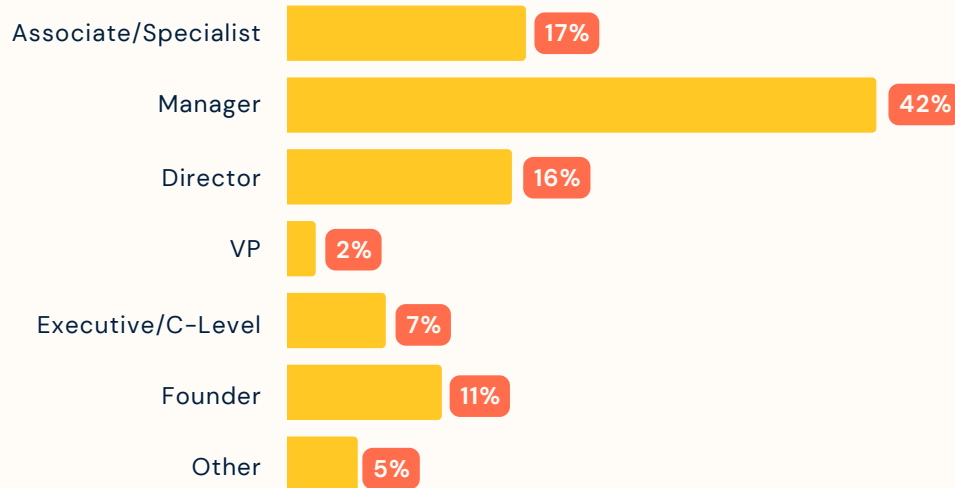
In addition to multiple-choice questions, we invited respondents to share written insights. These open-text responses were analyzed alongside role level and years of experience to surface themes and perspectives that add more depth to the data.

Respondent Snapshot

We asked a range of questions to help us better understand the data and bring more nuance to the insights throughout this report. Just like last year, a diverse mix of community professionals showed up to share their experiences—giving us a richer, more representative snapshot of the industry.

Which option best describes your level?

Sample Size: 378

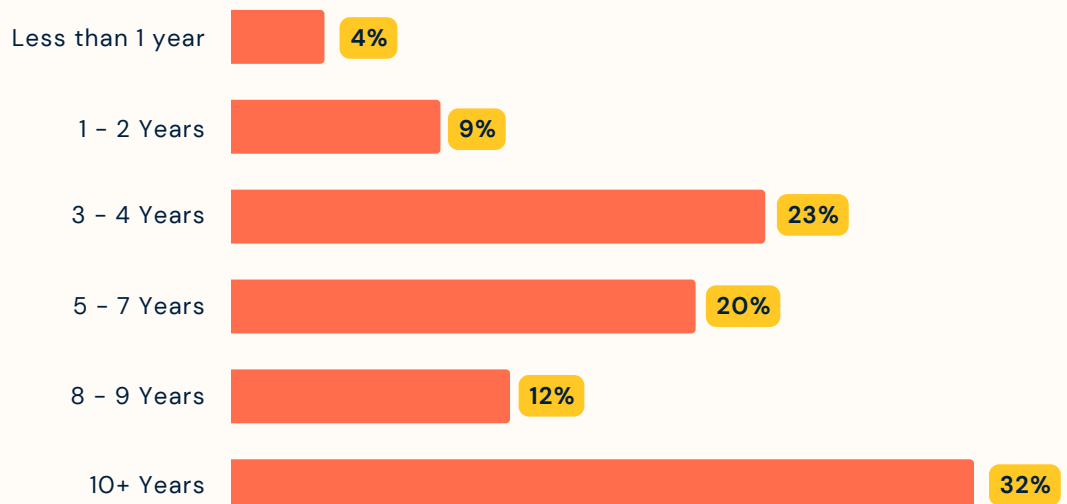


What we're seeing here: Community pros are more seasoned than ever.

No surprise here: as the community industry continues to grow and mature, so does its talent. For the first time ever, nearly a third of respondents report having over 10 years of experience in the field.

How many years of experience do you have as a community manager/professional?

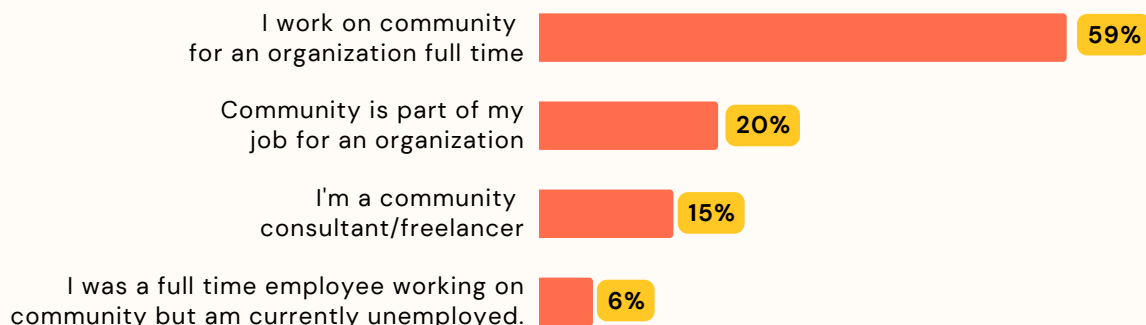
Sample Size: 210



Respondent Snapshot

Please describe the nature of your community building work.

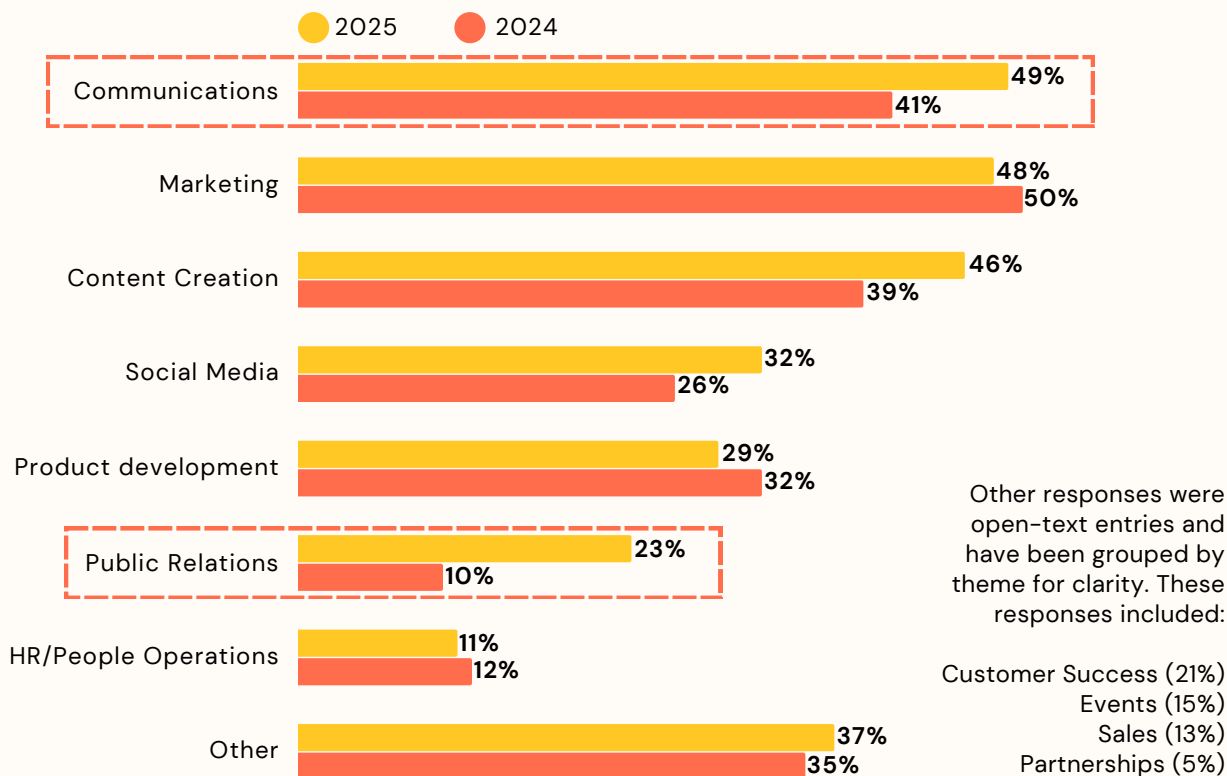
Sample Size: 433



What we're seeing here: Community work is getting more flexible and more freelance. Over the past five years, full-time community roles have declined—from 69% in 2021 to 59% in 2025. Meanwhile, freelance and consulting work is on the rise, tripling since 2022. This shift suggests growing demand for flexibility and more pros building their own paths.

What else do you work on in addition to community?

Answered only by those who indicate community is part of their job.



What we're seeing here: Community teams are stepping into the spotlight.

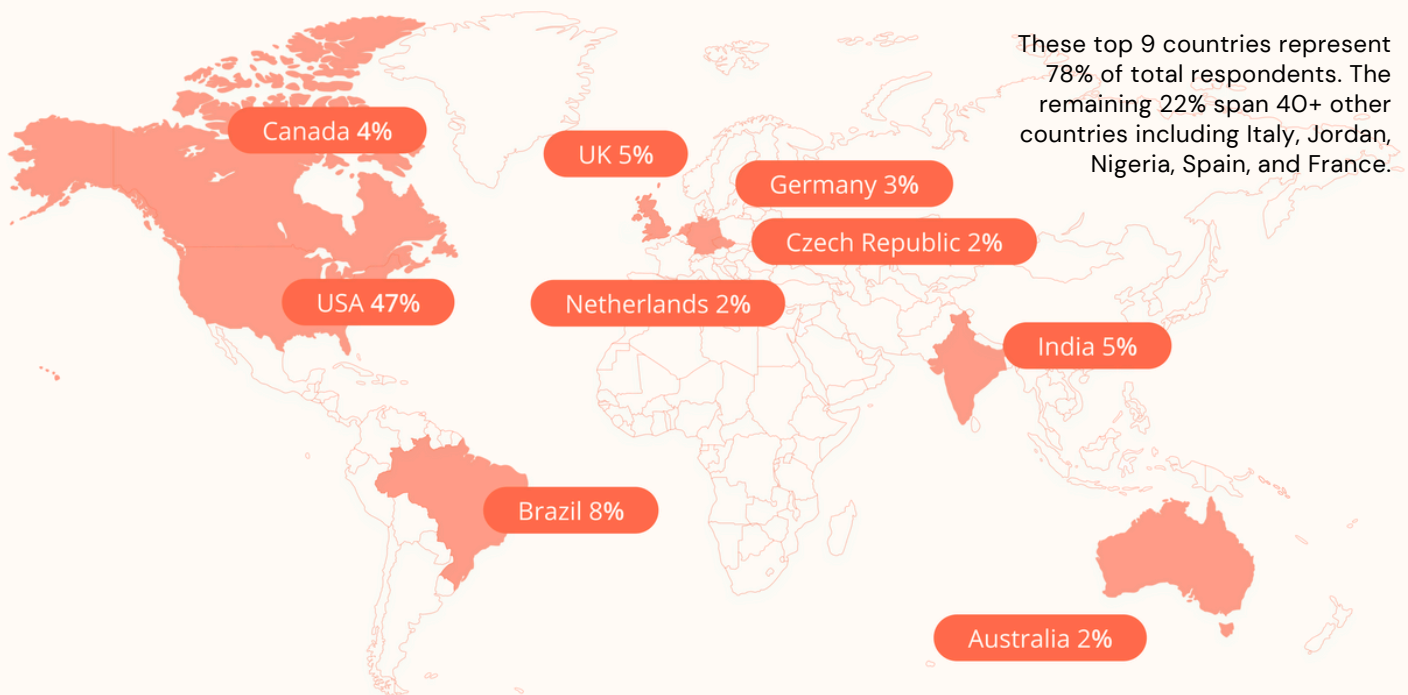
From 2024 to 2025, there's a jump in those working on communications (41% to 49%) and PR (10% to 23%). This suggests organizations are increasingly viewing community teams as essential to brand voice and visibility—not just member engagement.

Demographics

We asked optional questions about respondents' location, ethnicity, gender, and age to better understand who's building community today—and how representation is evolving.

In which country do you currently reside?

Sample Size: 412

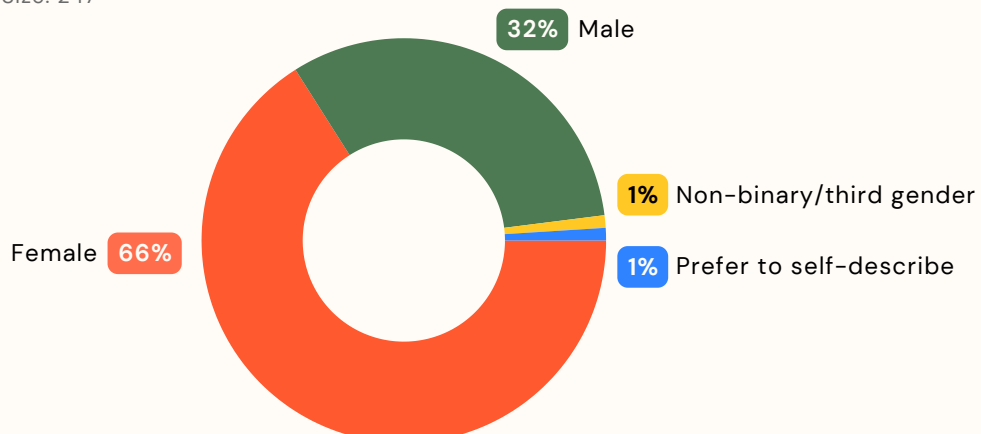


What we're seeing here: Global reach is growing, but the U.S. still leads by far.

Nearly half of respondents are based in the U.S., but we're seeing growth from countries like Brazil—pointing to a slow but steady expansion of the community industry worldwide.

How do you describe yourself?

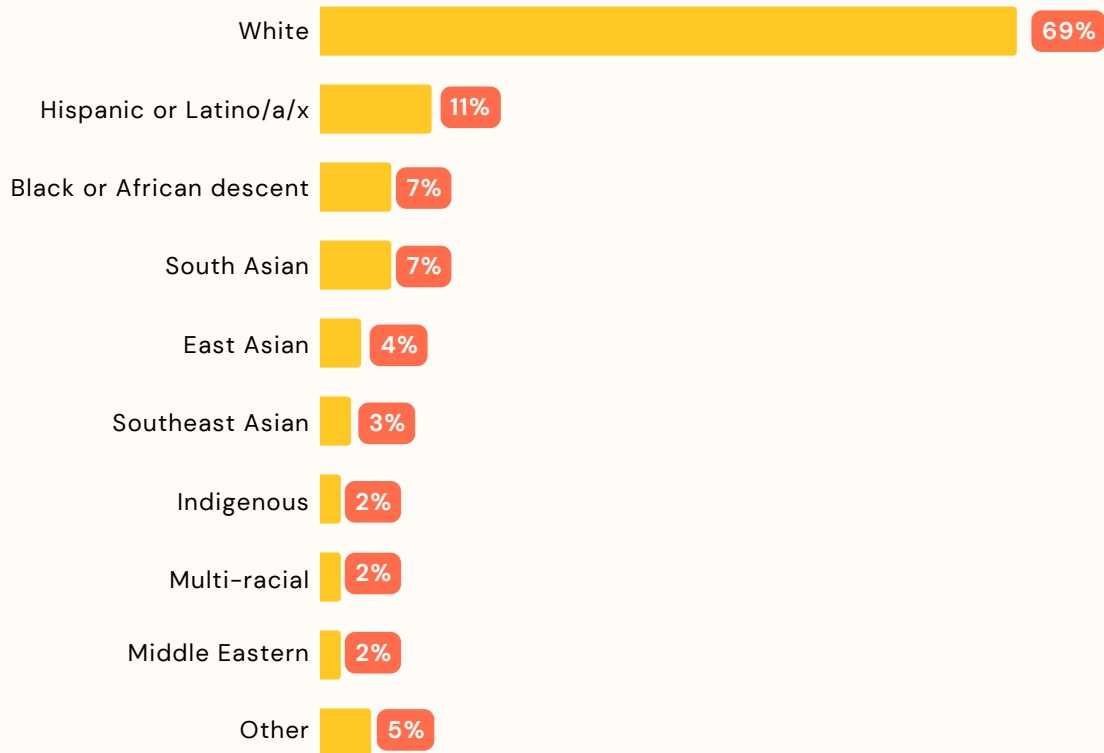
Sample Size: 247



Demographics

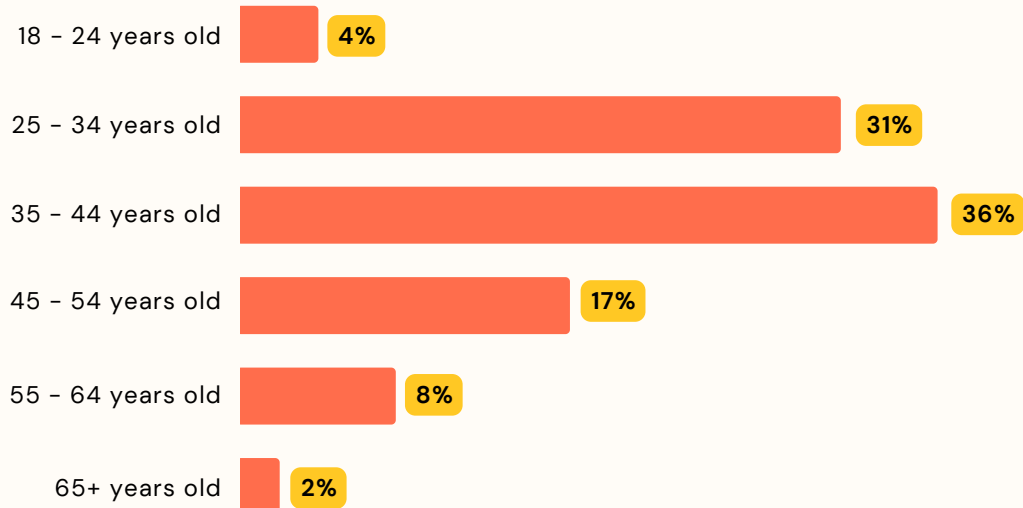
What is your racial or ethnic identity?

Sample Size: 243



How old are you?

Sample Size: 247



What we're seeing here: Representation is steady—but there's room to grow.

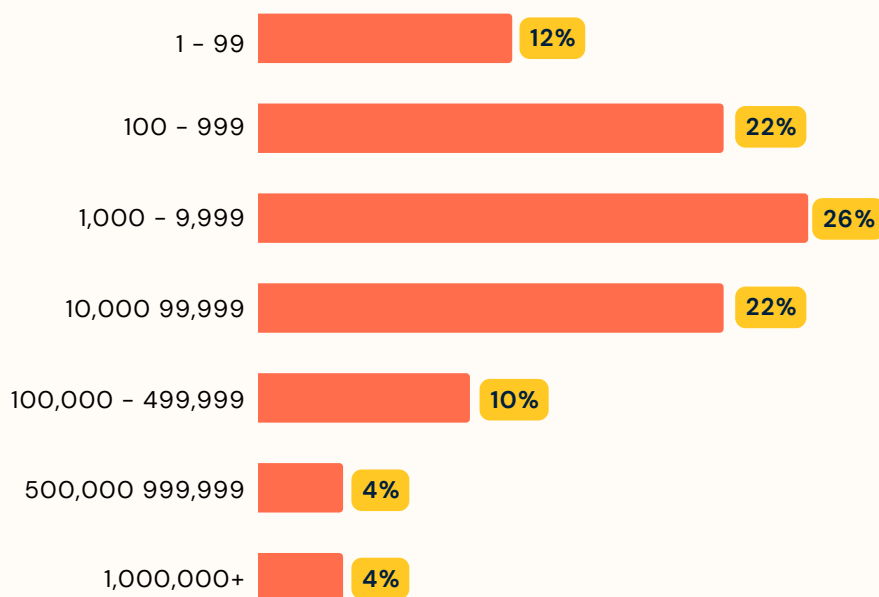
The community industry remains majority white (69%) and largely mid-career, with 67% of professionals aged 25–44. Hispanic/Latinx (11%), Black (7%), and South Asian (7%) representation remains consistent, and Indigenous identity rose to 2%—a small but meaningful shift.

Company Breakdown

We asked respondents to share details about the companies and communities they support—including total member count, how long their community has existed, company revenue, and team size. These questions help us understand where community lives across different stages of growth and scale.

Approximately how many total members are in your community?*

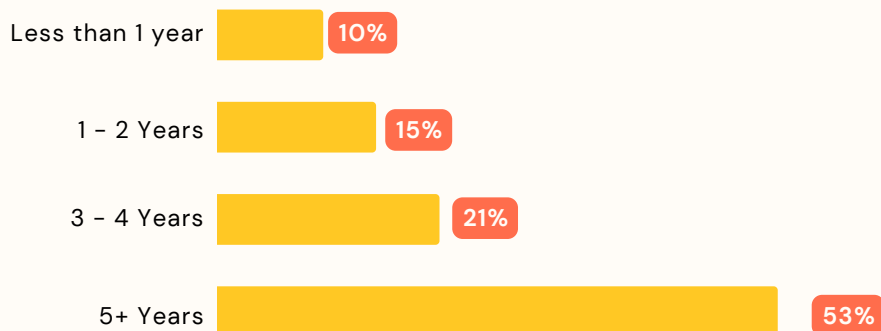
Sample Size: 336



* We have cross tabulated this question with a question about moderators on [page 17](#).

Approximately how long has your organization's community existed?

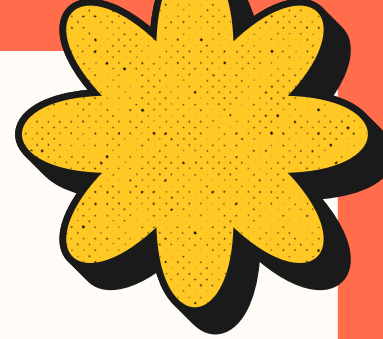
Sample Size: 320



What we're seeing here: Communities are growing—and sticking around.

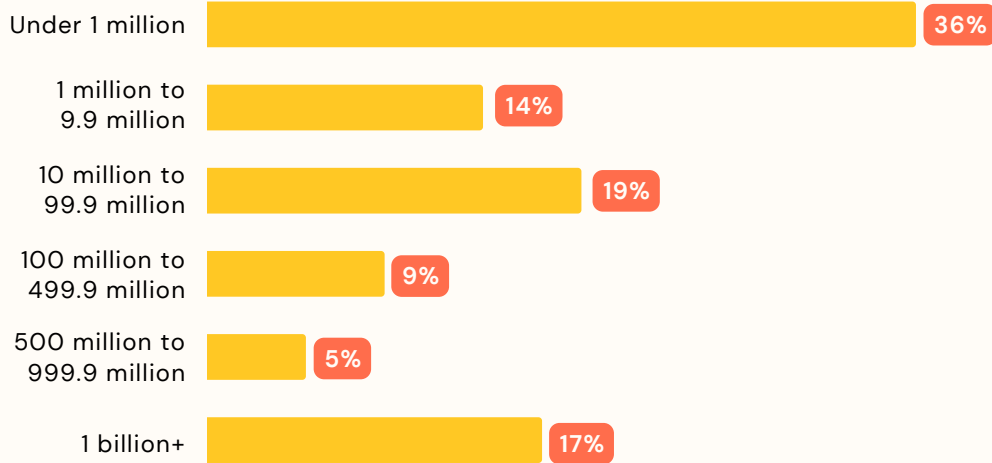
In 2025, 14% of communities reported over 100,000 members, up from just 9% in 2023. And more than half have existed for 5+ years—the highest rate in six years—signaling both scale and staying power.

Company Breakdown



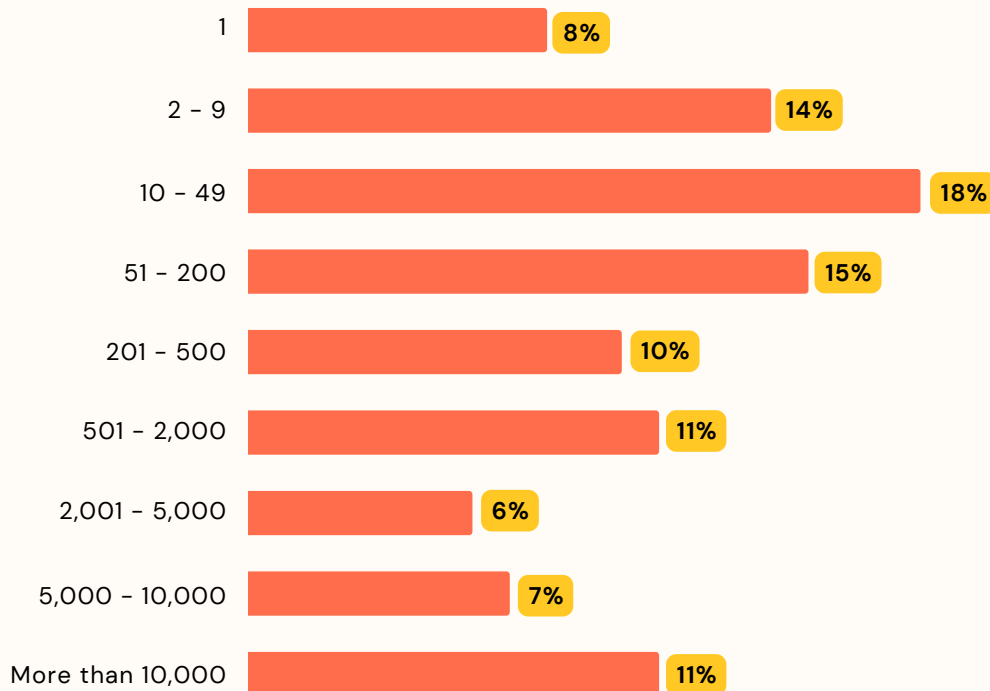
What is the estimated annual revenue for your company?

Sample Size: 389



Approximately how many employees does your organization have worldwide?

Sample Size: 388



What we're seeing here: Community shows up at every stage.

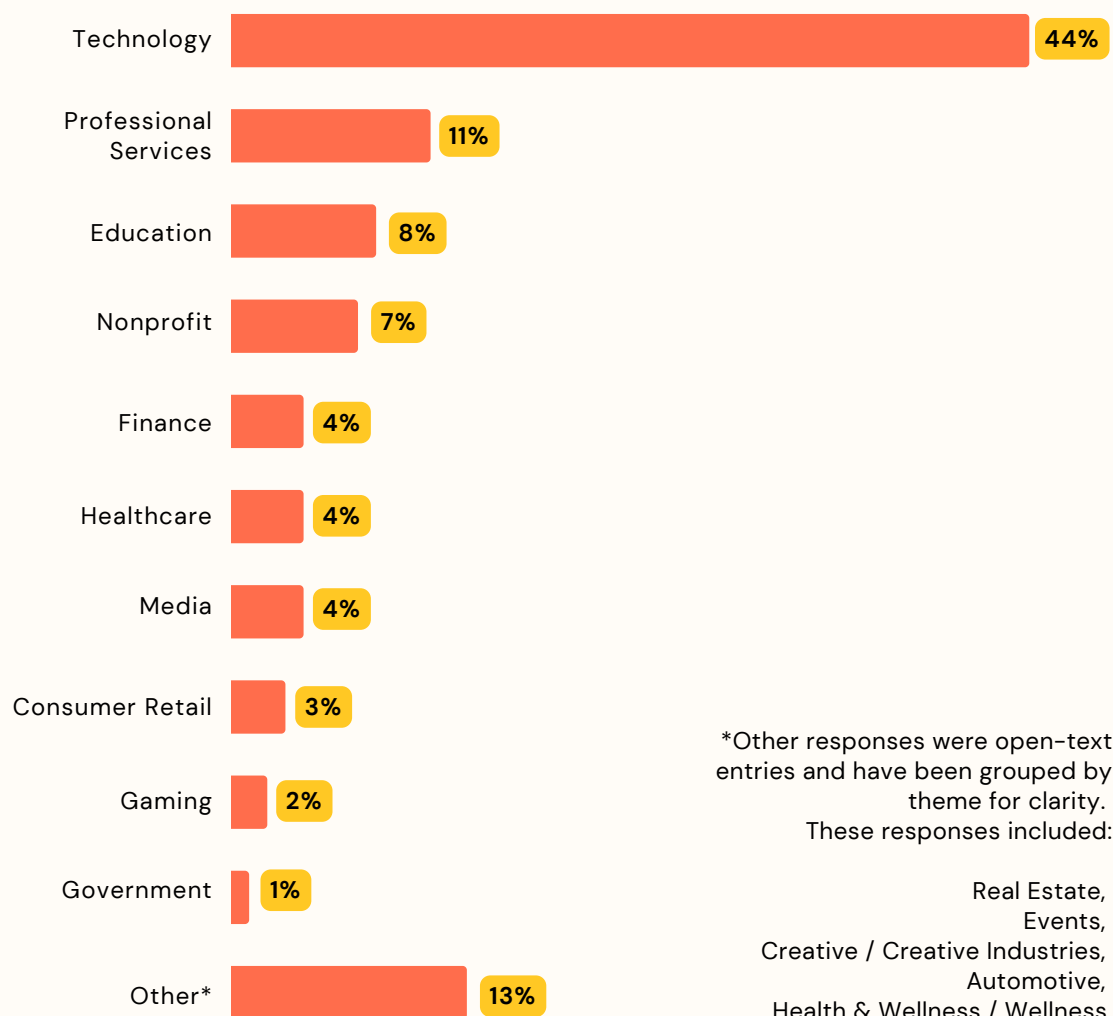
In 2025, 36% of respondents work at companies earning under \$1 million, while 17% are at billion-dollar organizations. That range is reflected in team size too—from startups with fewer than 10 employees (22%) to enterprises with 10,000+ (11%). Community is proving its value across the board.

Industry

We asked respondents which industry they work in to see where community roles are most common—and how that’s shifting as the field expands beyond tech.

Which of the following most closely describes the industry you work in?

Sample Size: 389



What we're seeing here: Community is expanding beyond tech.

While tech still leads, its share dropped from 55% to 44% in 2025. Meanwhile, “Other” industries hit a high of 13%, and sectors like professional services, healthcare, and nonprofit continued to grow—showing that community roles are becoming more mainstream and cross-industry.



Community Programs



In this section, we explore how communities engage their members—who's participating, what kinds of programs are offered, and how those programs are run. We asked respondents to share which member types they serve, what events and forums they host, and how they structure both synchronous and asynchronous programming.

You'll find insights into management models (in-house vs. community-led), moderation, and which platforms are most commonly used for events and forums. Together, this paints a picture of how today's community teams are creating connection, delivering value, and adapting their programming to meet evolving member needs.

What you'll find in this section:

Members

- Who participates in communities

Member Contribution

- How members contribute to the community and how they are being rewarded

Asynchronous Programming

- What kind of events communities are running
- How community teams are managing their event programs
- The event platforms being used in our industry

Synchronous Programming

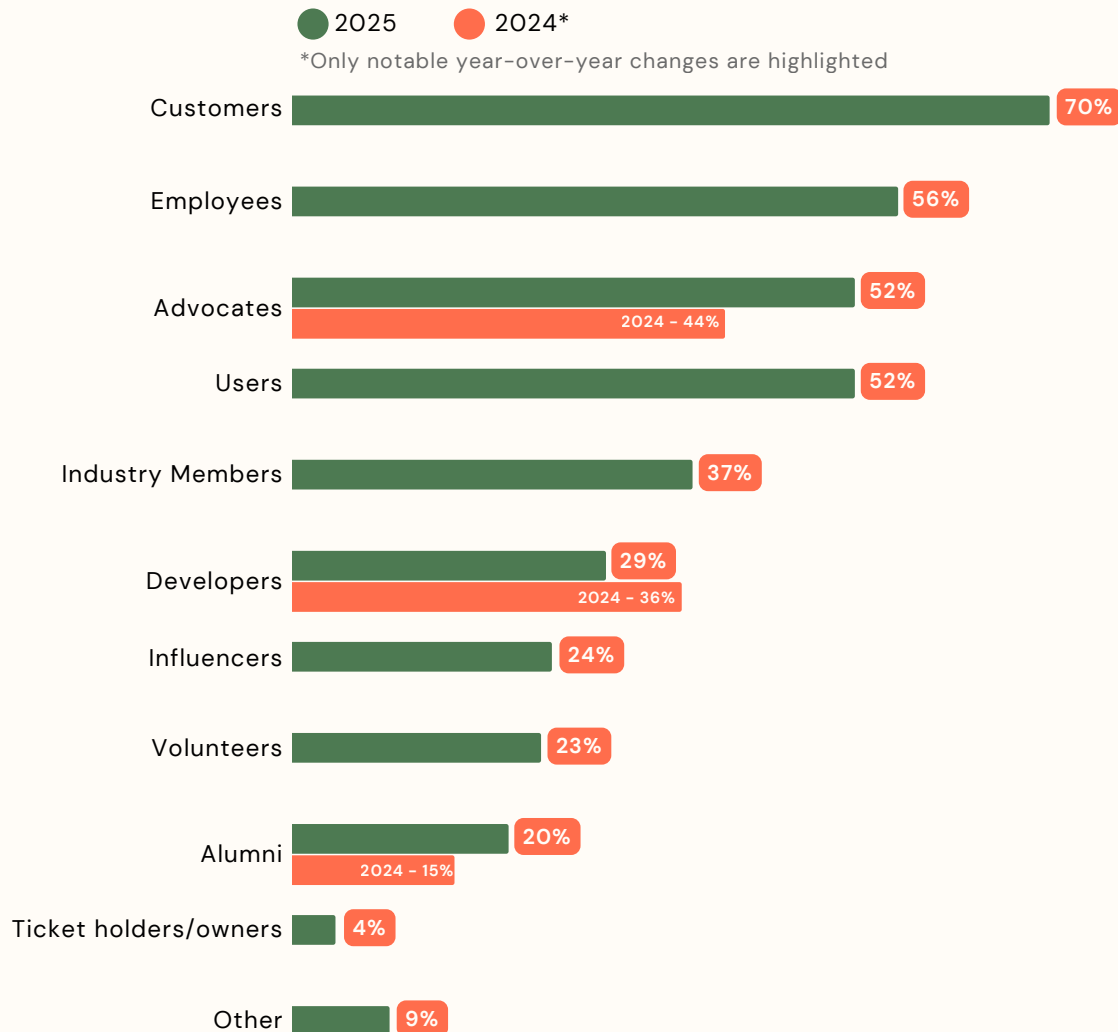
- What kind of online programs communities are running
- How community teams are managing their online programs
- The platforms being used in our industry

Members

No matter the goals or programs, every community is built around its members. So, we asked respondents: who exactly is part of your community?

Who participates in your community?

Sample Size: 282



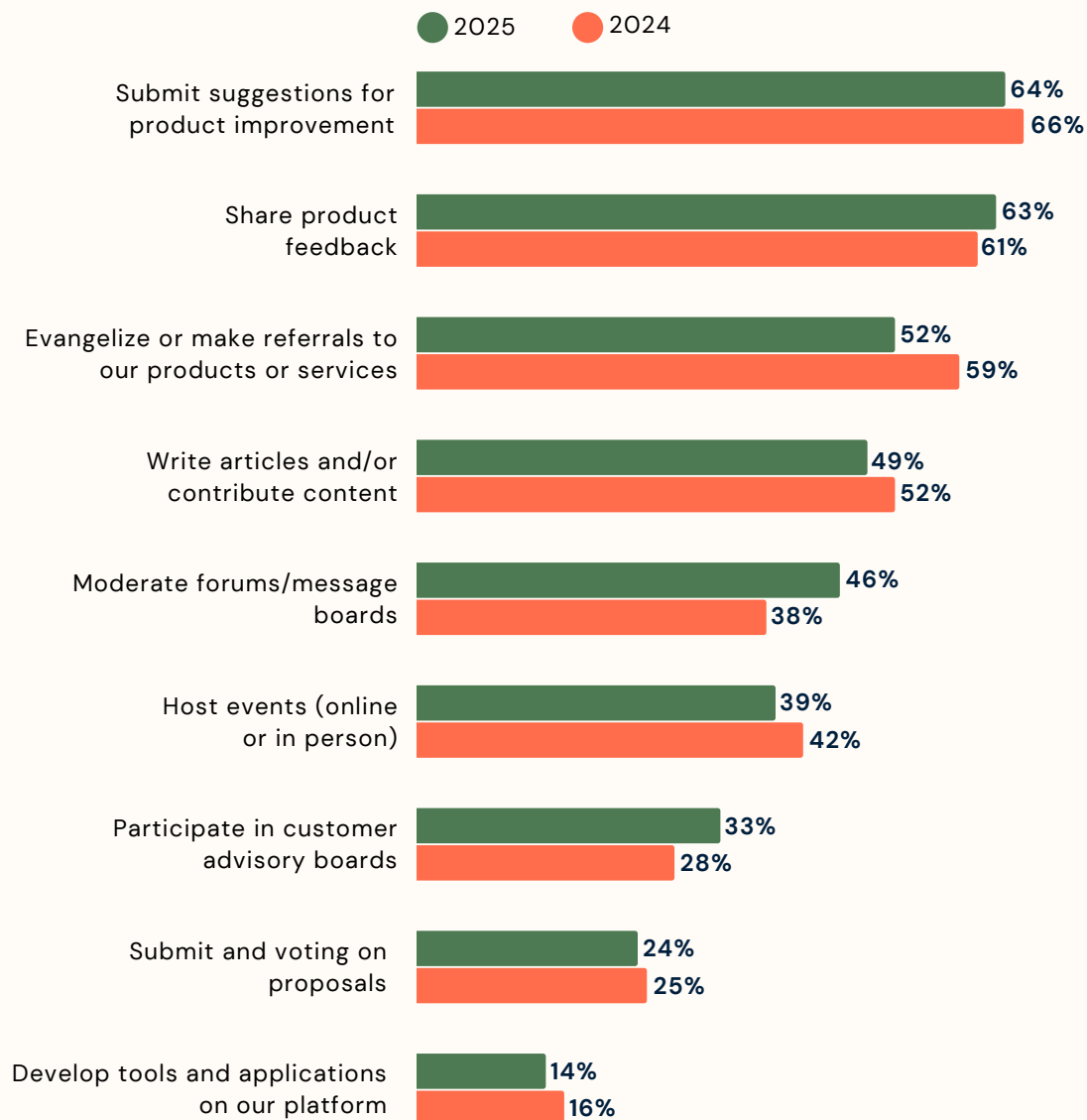
What we're seeing here: Member makeup is mostly steady, but a few shifts stand out. While most member types held steady year over year, a few shifts stood out. Advocate participation saw the biggest jump, rising to 52% in 2025—pointing to deeper investment in community-led growth. Developer participation dropped to 29%, hinting at changing priorities or a move away from technical audiences. Meanwhile, alumni engagement reached an all-time high at 20%, as more teams invest in long-term relationships beyond active membership.

Member Contribution

We asked how members are contributing to the community and how they are being rewarded for those contributions.

How are your community members contributing to the community?

Sample Size: 219



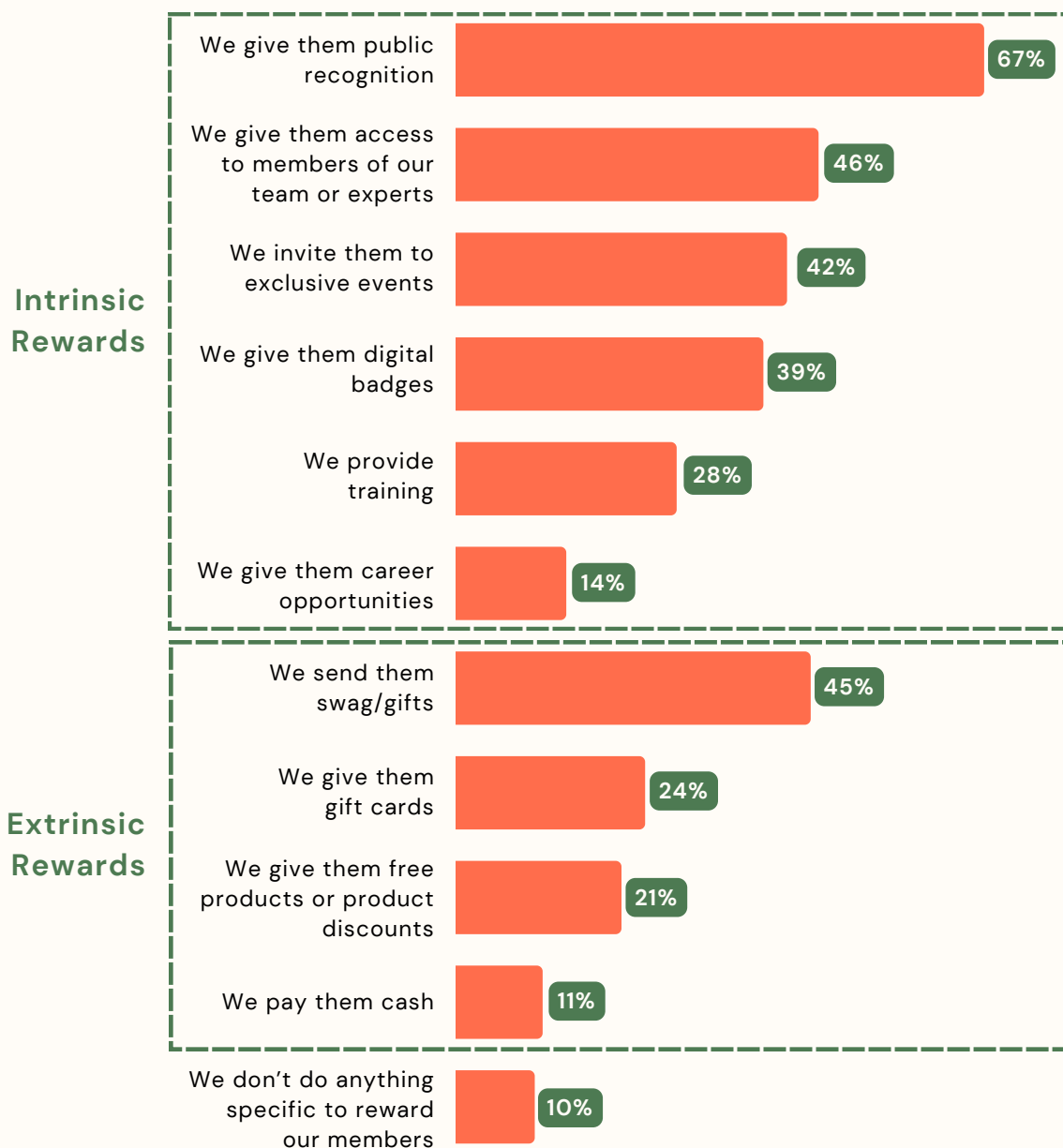
What we're seeing here: Members are contributing in new ways

The most common way members contribute is still through product suggestions and feedback, showing that communities are still critical sources of insight. But some traditionally strong contributions are slipping: fewer members are evangelizing or making referrals (down from 59% to 52%) and fewer are hosting events or creating content. On the other hand, moderation is on the rise, jumping from 38% to 46%.

Member Contribution

How are you rewarding community members who make a positive impact?

Sample Size: 220



What we're seeing here: Recognition and access still matter most.

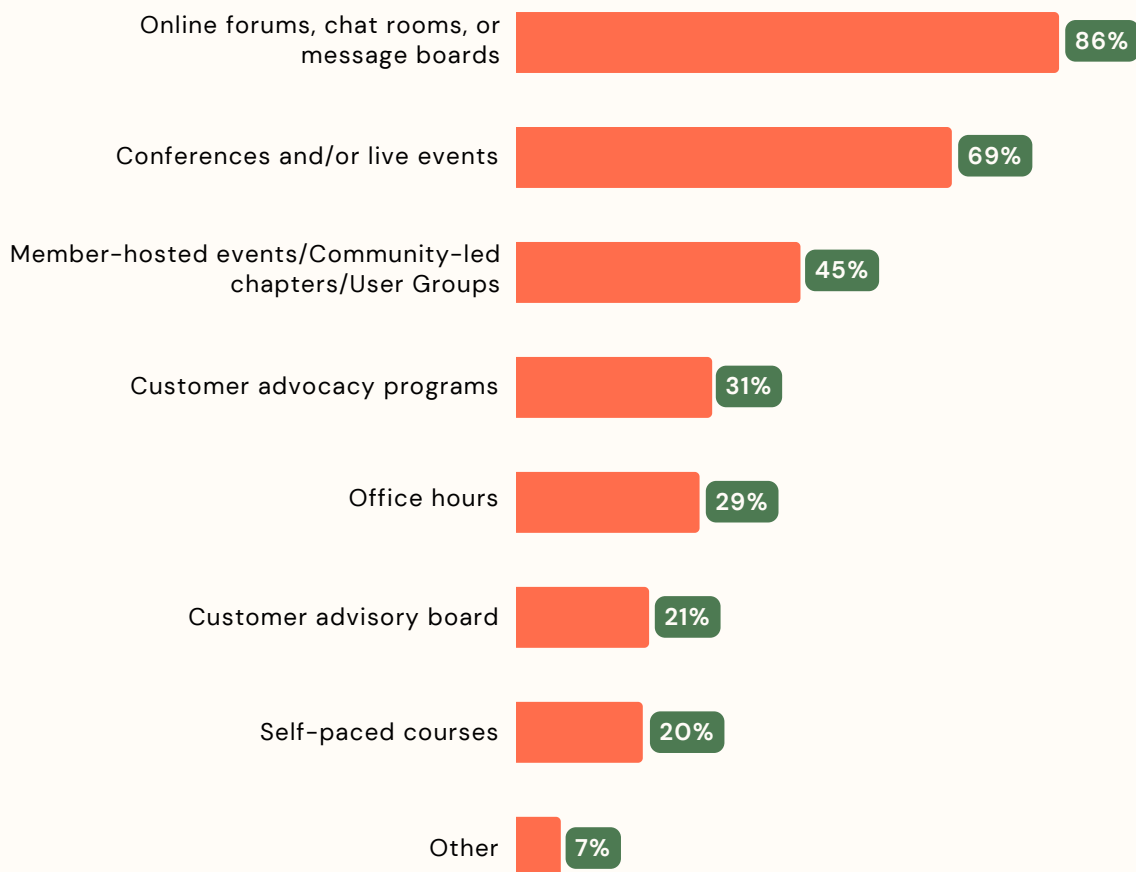
We know community members contribute for many reasons—and those reasons often fall into two categories: extrinsic, like cash or swag; and intrinsic, like recognition or connection. Most communities lean heavily on the latter: 67% offer public recognition, 46% offer access to experts, and 42% invite members to exclusive events. Tangible rewards like swag and gift cards are common, but less emphasized—suggesting community programs are still primarily designed to fuel reputation, belonging, and access over financial compensation.

Programming

We asked respondents to share information about the types of community programming they offer, who participates, and who is responsible for running these programs. Online forums continue to be most common type of community program.

What type of programs does your community host?

Sample Size: 275



Learn more about member identity, rewards, and programming on the CMX Blog!

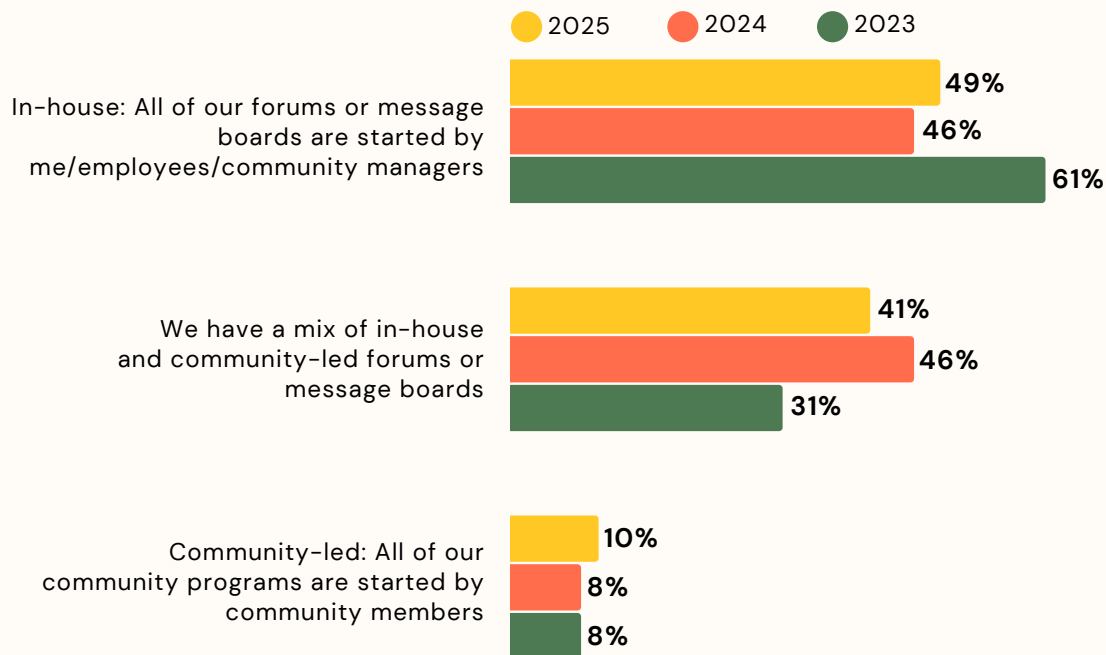
[The CMX Social Identity Cycle](#)

Asynchronous Programming

Of the 86% of respondents who host online forums, chat spaces, or message boards, we asked follow-up questions to learn how these programs are managed and where they live.

What best describes how you manage your online forums/message boards?

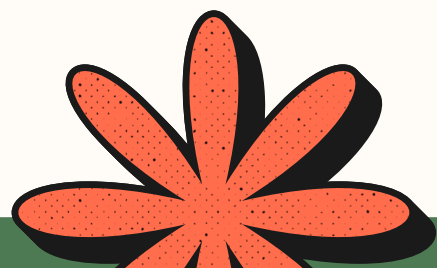
Sample Size: 233



What we're seeing here: Forum management is becoming more collaborative.

When it comes to managing online forums, message boards, and chat spaces, communities are increasingly turning to shared models. In 2025, in-house management dropped to 49%, down from 61% in 2023.

The biggest shift? A rise in hybrid models—where staff and community members co-manage these spaces—growing from 31% in 2023 to 41% in 2025. More teams are handing over the reins, signalling greater trust in community leadership and a move toward collaborative ownership.

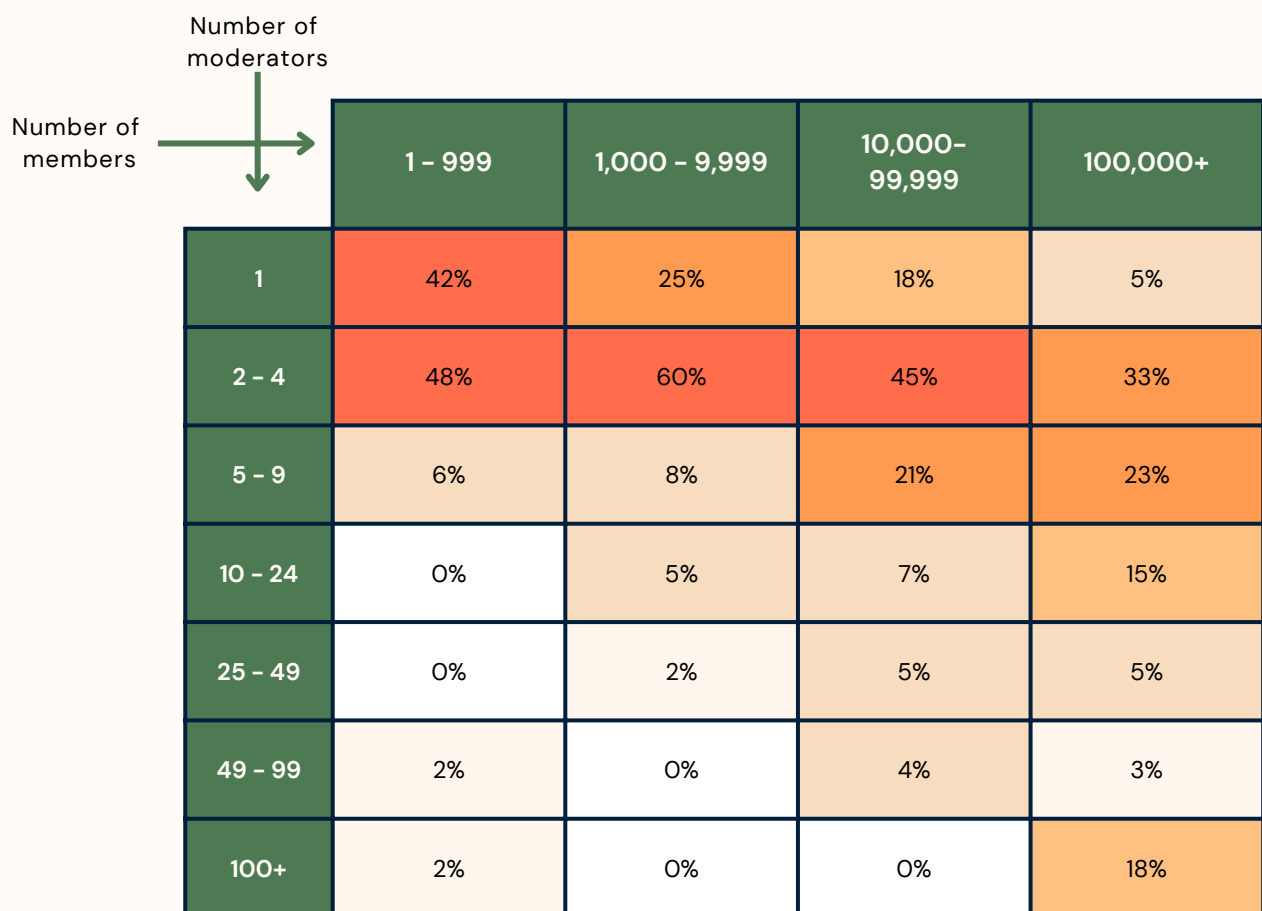


Asynchronous Programming

We asked respondents how many moderators their online forums and message boards have, and compared that against total community size. The goal? To help teams benchmark their own programs—whether they’re maintaining an existing space or planning to launch something new.

How many moderators do you have for your forums and/or message boards and approximately how many total members are in your community (pg. 11)?

● Greater than 40% ● 20% – 39% ● 10% – 19% ● 1% – 9% ○ 0%



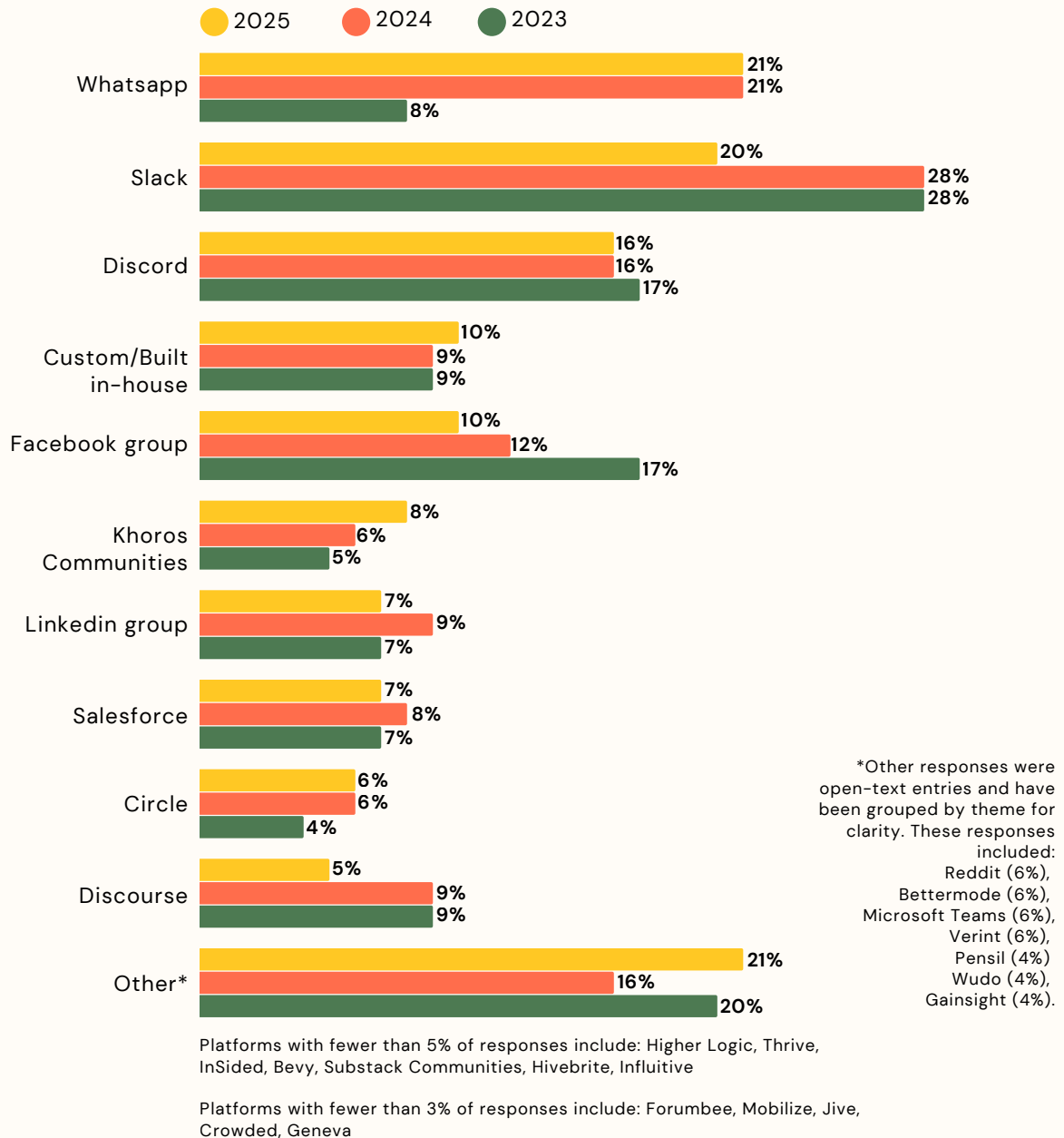
What we’re seeing here: Most communities are run by small moderation teams.

For example, 33% of communities with over 100,000 members have just 2–4 moderators, and 5% rely on a single moderator. At the other end, only 18% of these large communities have 100+ moderators. Among mid-sized communities (1,000–9,999 members), 60% operate with just 2–4 moderators. This suggests that while moderation tends to scale somewhat with size, many teams still run lean—or are finding alternative ways to manage engagement and safety.

Asynchronous Programming

What platform(s) do you use to host your community forums/message boards?

Sample Size: 244



What we're seeing here: The forum landscape is shifting—fast.

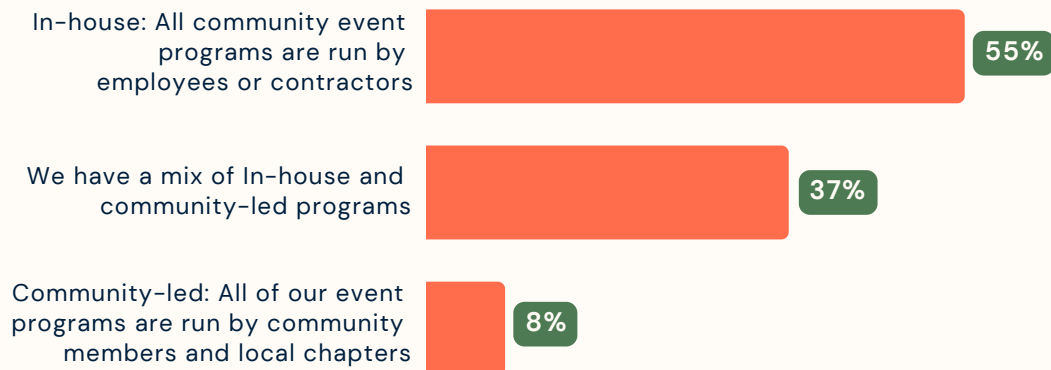
Platform use is diversifying, with no clear frontrunner in 2025. “Other” was one of the most selected options (21%), highlighting how fragmented and fast-changing this space has become. WhatsApp held steady at 21% after barely registering in 2023 (8%), while Slack saw a continued decline—from 28% to 20%—and for the first time in our report’s history, lost its spot as the most-used platform. All signs point to an ecosystem in flux, with teams actively experimenting and adjusting to evolving needs.

Synchronous Programming

For respondents who host conferences, live events, or community-led programs like member-run chapters or user groups, we asked additional questions to dive deeper into how these event programs are structured and managed.

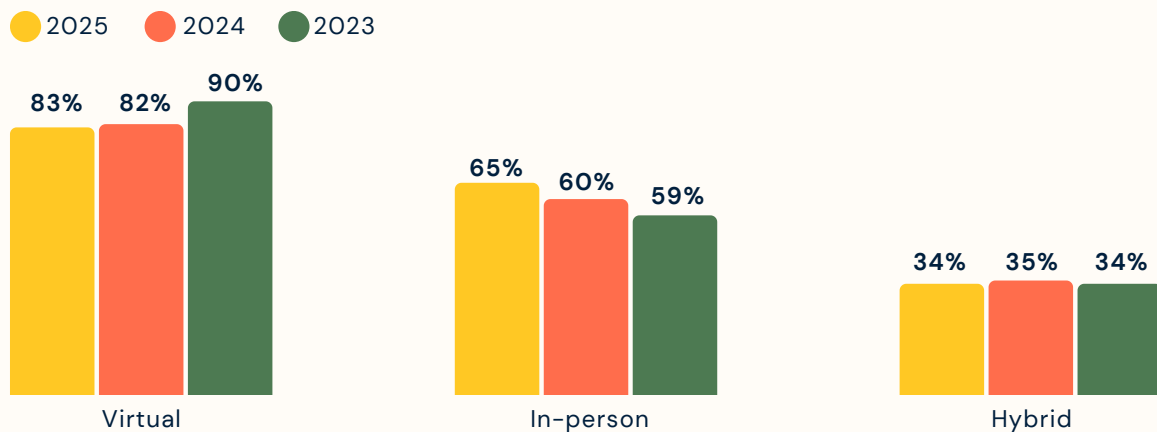
What best describes how you manage your events?

Sample Size: 158



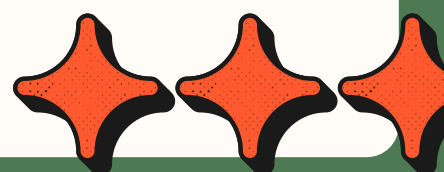
What type of events did you host for your community in the past 12 months?

Sample Size: 185



What we're seeing here: In-person events are making a steady comeback.

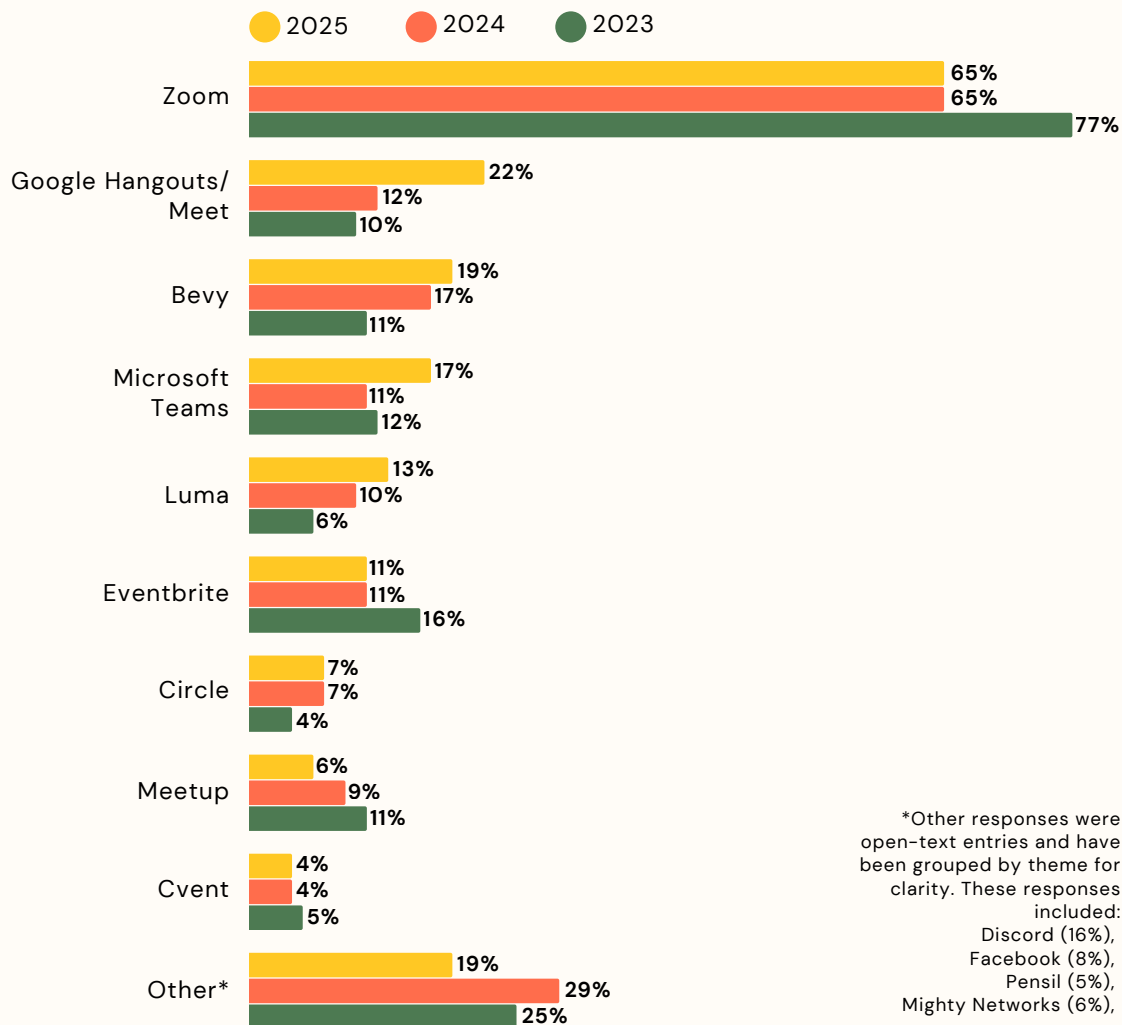
In 2025, 65% of respondents hosted in-person events, up from just 29% in 2022—a more than twofold increase in three years. While virtual and hybrid events remain strong, in-person has seen the most consistent growth, signalling a renewed appetite for face-to-face connection in community building.



Synchronous Programming

What platform(s) are you using to host community events?

Sample Size: 181

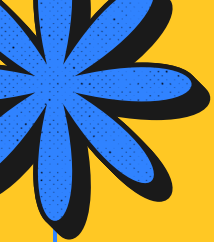


Platforms with fewer than 5% of responses include: Accelevents, Goldcast, Splash, Get Sessions.

Platforms with fewer than 2% of responses include: Airmeet, Bizzabo, Brella, HeySummit, InEvent, Localist, On24, Remo

What we're seeing here: Zoom still dominates, but new tools are gaining ground.

Zoom remains the most-used platform for community events in 2025, with 65% of respondents selecting it—holding steady from 2024, but still down from 77% in 2023. Bevy usage grew again this year, climbing to 19%, nearly doubling from 2023 (11%). Google Meet also continued its upward trend, rising to 22% from just 10% two years ago. Meanwhile, Microsoft Teams and Luma both saw modest growth, and the “Other” category dropped to 19% after spiking in 2024—suggesting that experimentation with lesser-known tools may be tapering off. While Zoom still dominates, the ecosystem is clearly expanding.



Community Teams

This section explores the structure, roles, and perception of today's community teams. We look at how teams are organized—from which departments they sit under to how many people are involved and what specific roles they play. We also asked respondents to reflect on the impact of their work and how it's perceived across their organizations. Are other departments paying more attention to community? Is investment growing? These questions offer a clear snapshot of how community teams operate, the value they bring, and how that value is evolving. The data in this section reveals just how embedded and strategic community has become across industries.

What you'll find in this section:

Team Organization

- Which department community teams are part of
- Number of employees working on community
- Community functions and team roles

Impact and Interest

- How organizations are feeling about community
- How community teams are impacting business objectives
- Respondents' sentiment around their organizations investment in community



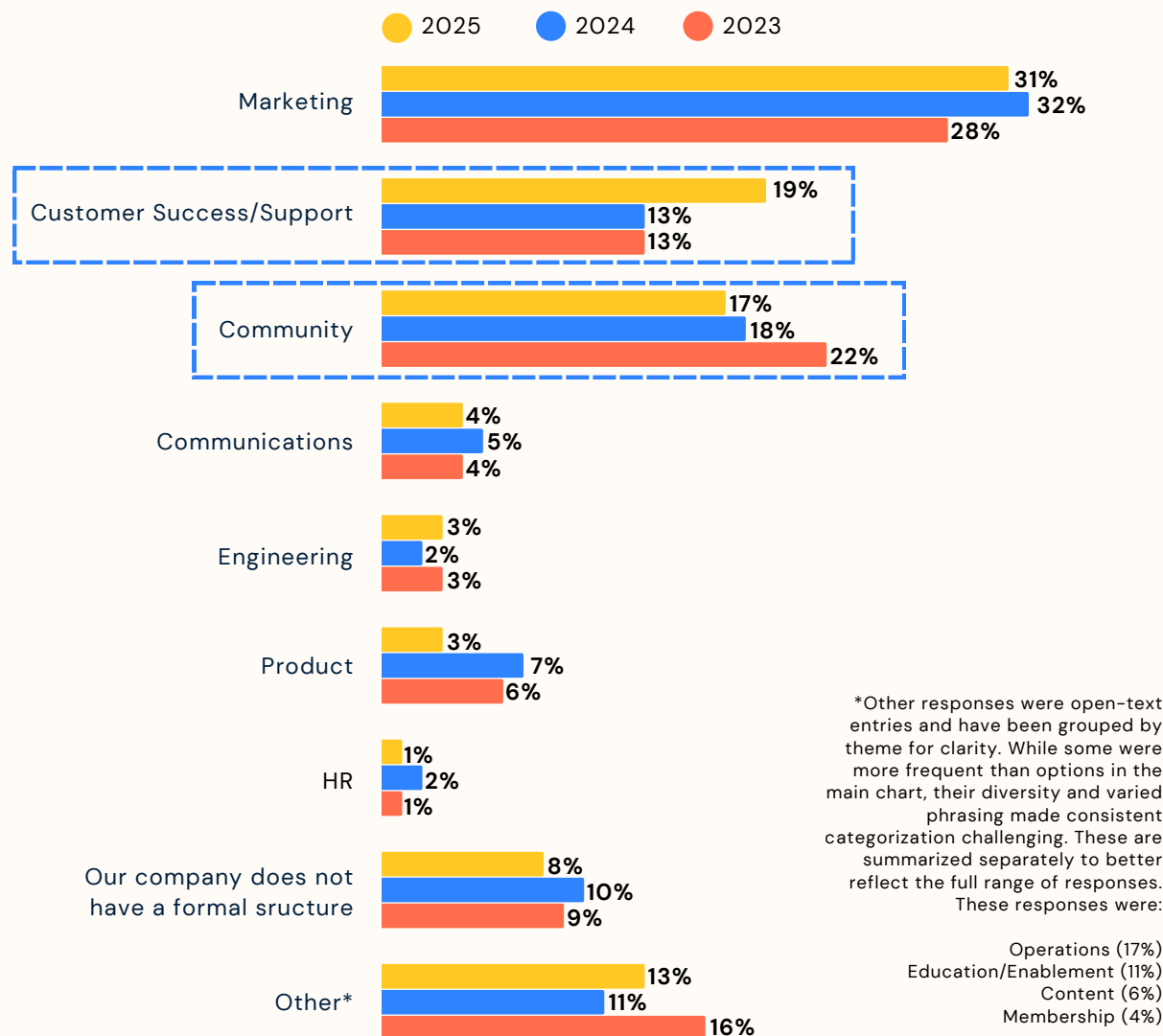


Team Organization

We asked respondents a series of questions to understand how their community teams are structured—and how that structure is evolving as the field grows.

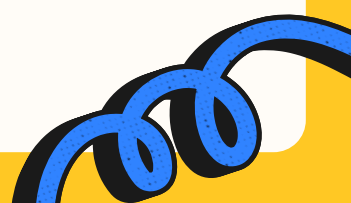
What department is your community team part of?

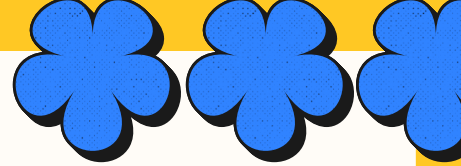
Sample Size: 264



What we're seeing here: Community teams are becoming more distributed.

Marketing continues to house the largest share of community teams (31%), but Customer Success is gaining ground—rising from 8% in 2022 to 19% in 2025. Meanwhile, the percentage of teams with no formal departmental structure remains steady, and fewer respondents report being part of standalone community departments, down from 22% in 2022 to 17% this year.

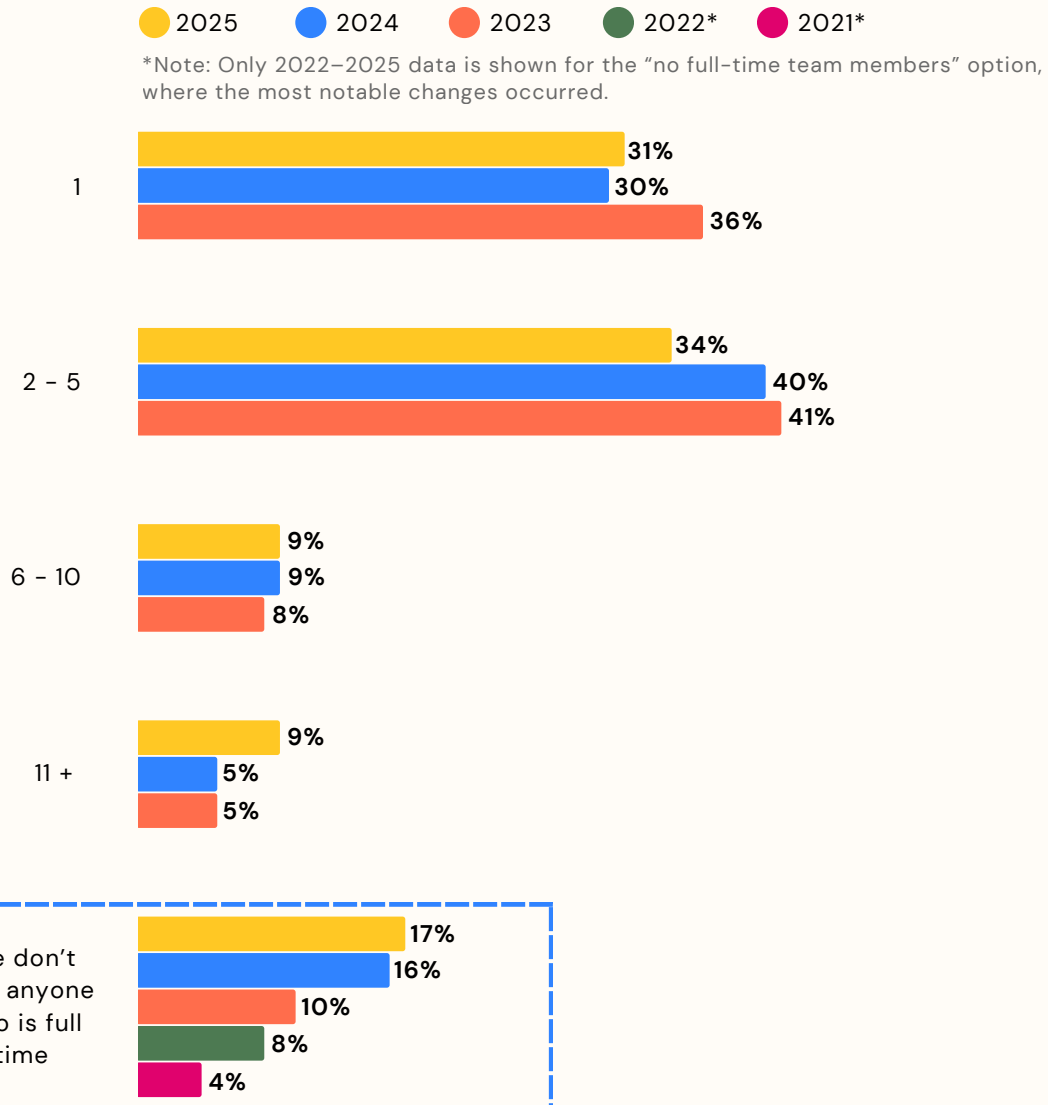




Team Organization

Approximately how many employees work full time on your community team?

Sample Size: 298



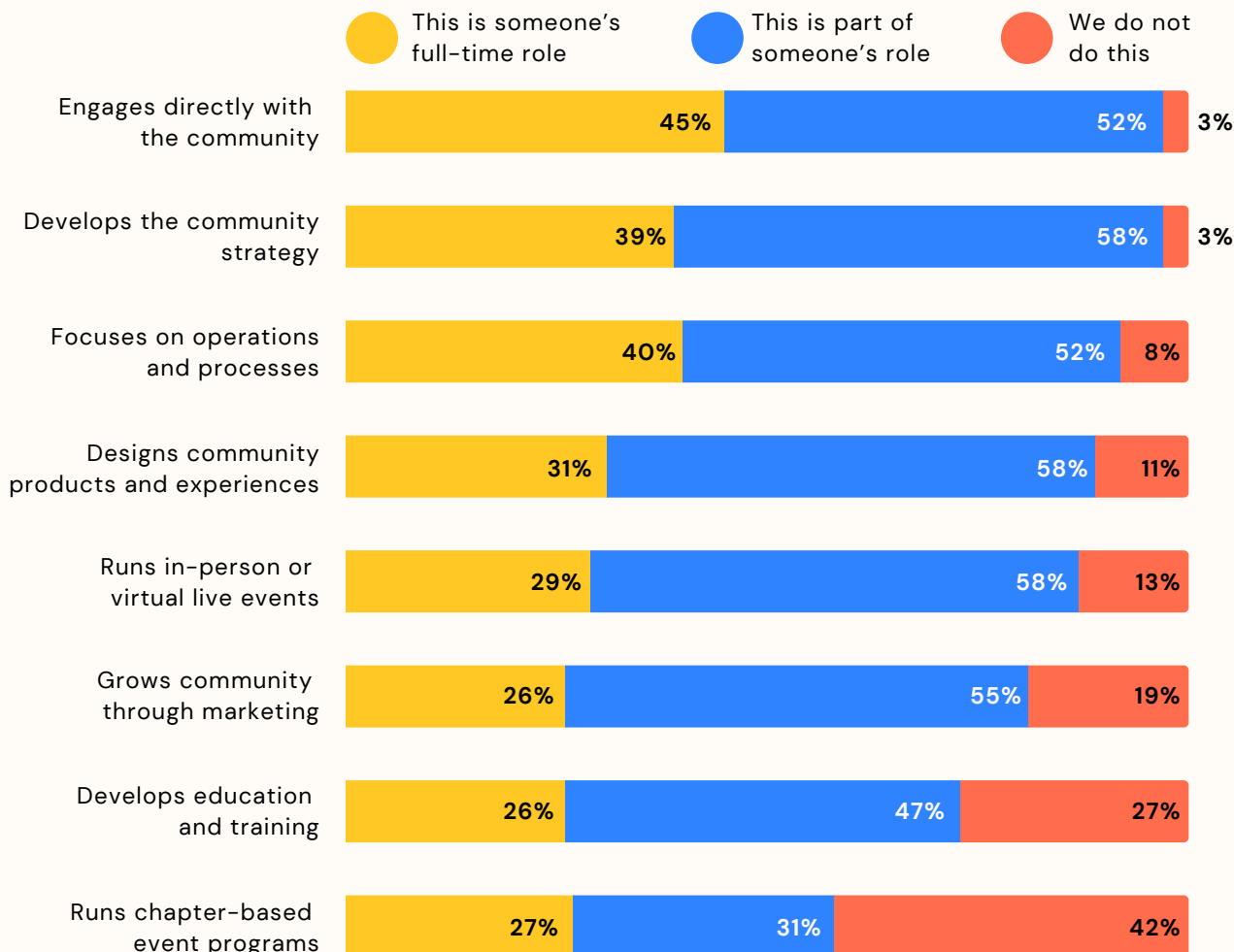
What we're seeing here: Bigger expectations, not bigger teams.

In 2025, nearly one in five respondents (17%) said they don't have anyone working full time on community—up from 8% in 2022 and over four times the rate in 2021 (4%). Solo practitioners (1-person teams) still make up around 30%, and the most common team size remains 2–5 people (34%). As noted earlier, community work is expanding into more departments—especially Customer Success, which has nearly doubled its share since 2022. But that growth hasn't translated into larger or better-resourced teams. Even as community strategy gains traction, many are still expected to scale impact without added headcount.

Team Organization

Which of the following roles do you have on your community team?

Sample Size: 309



What we're seeing here: Community roles are narrowing, not multiplying.

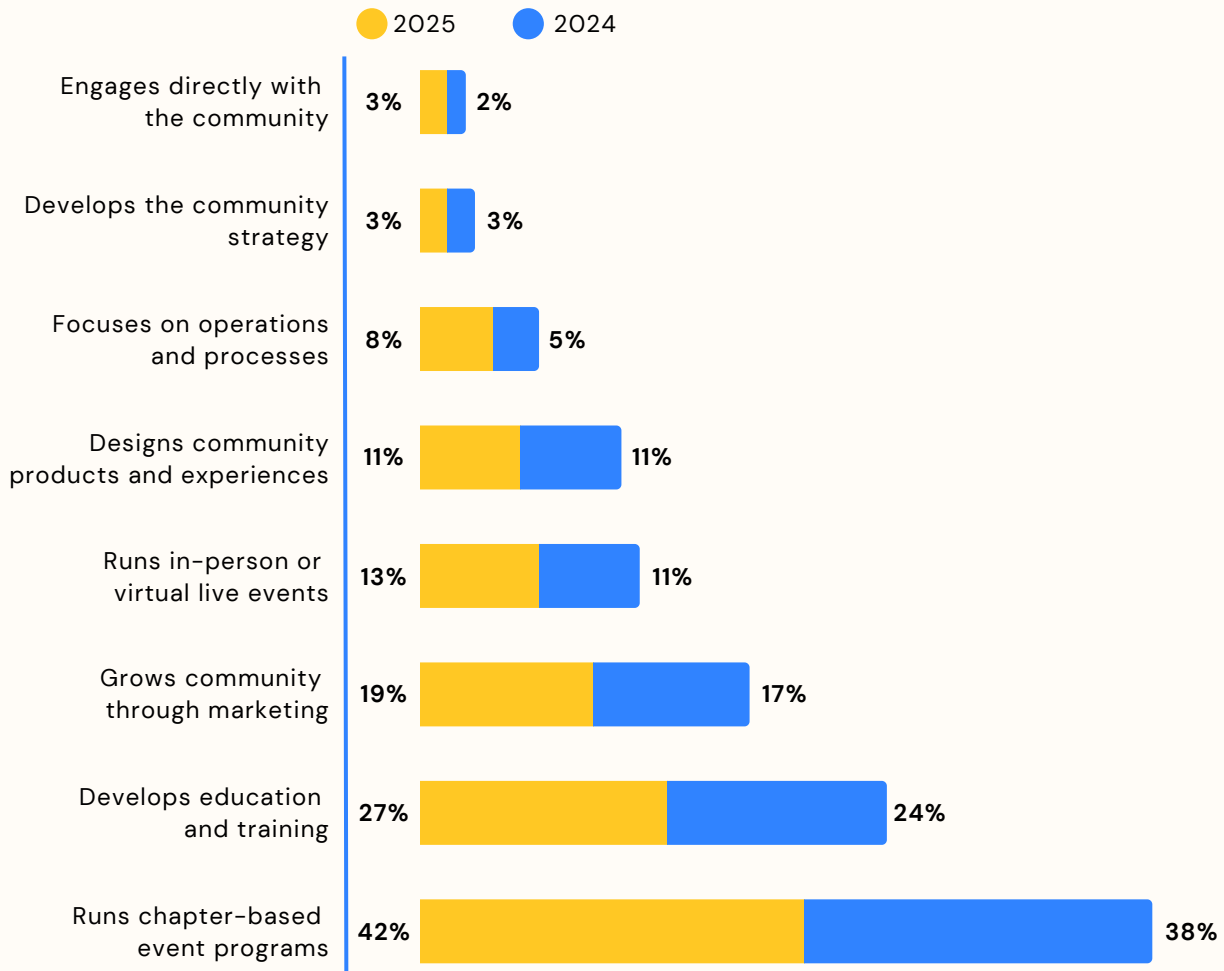
This chart reveals just how stretched—and strategically selective—community teams have become. Roles like running chapter-based programs, designing community experiences, and developing education are the most likely to fall off the priority list. Even traditionally core functions like operations and event management are trending more toward part-time support. As the scope of community work grows, teams are making sharper trade-offs about where to invest limited time and resources.

On the next page, we explore how these roles have changed over the past four years—and what the rise in “we don’t do this” signals about the future of community work.

Team Organization

Respondents who answered “We do not do this” to the question “Which of the following roles do you have on your community team?” (Year-over-Year Comparison)

Roles are listed in the same order as the previous page for easy comparison.



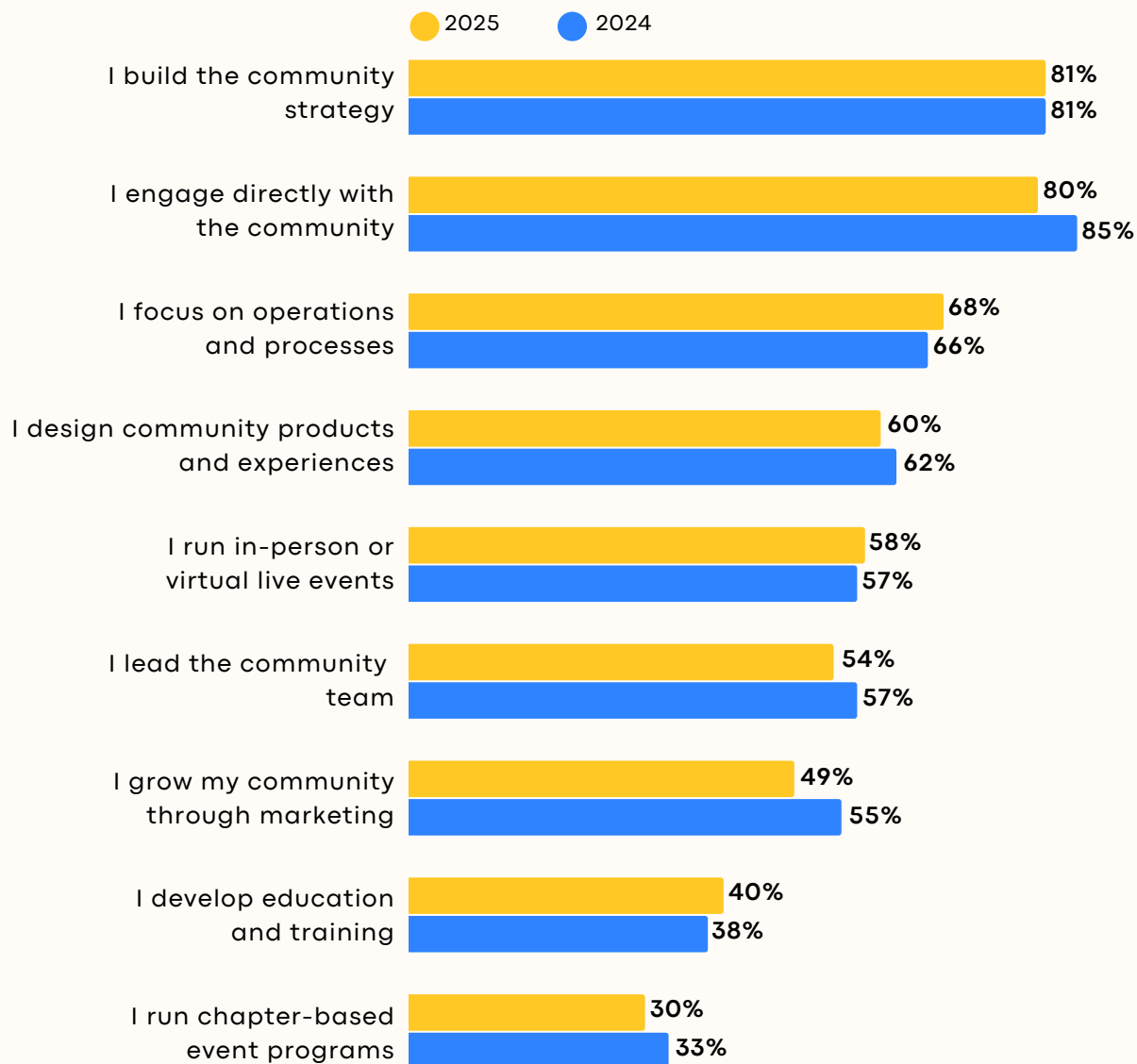
What we're seeing here: The age of the do-it-all community team might be over.

Every role saw a bump in “we don’t do this” responses this year—a signal that teams are shedding responsibilities, either by necessity or design. Whether it’s budget cuts, leaner staffing, or sharper prioritization, community pros are being forced to focus on fewer things. The era of one team owning everything from events to education to product feedback? It’s slipping further out of reach.

Team Organization

What is your role with your community?

Sample Size: 312



What we're seeing here: Roles are stabilizing, but not static.

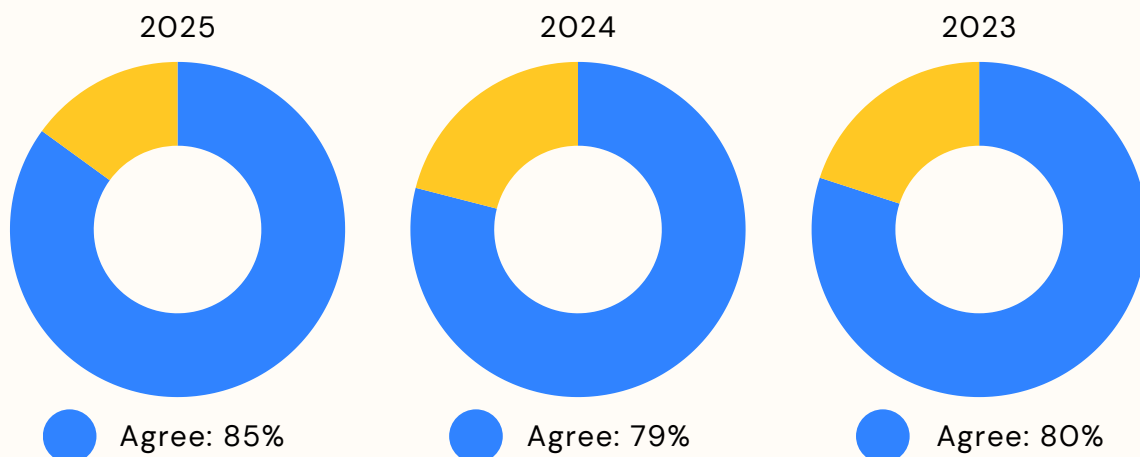
Most roles saw modest shifts since last year, with a few (like marketing and chapter programs) dipping slightly. Meanwhile, operational roles continue to gain traction—suggesting more focus on scalable systems over expansion.

Impact and Interest

We asked respondents about the impact of their community on their organization. We can see that there is more optimism than last year but it hasn't rebounded to how respondents were feeling in 2022, even though community continues to have a positive impact.

"Community has had a positive impact on our organization's objectives over the past 12 months."

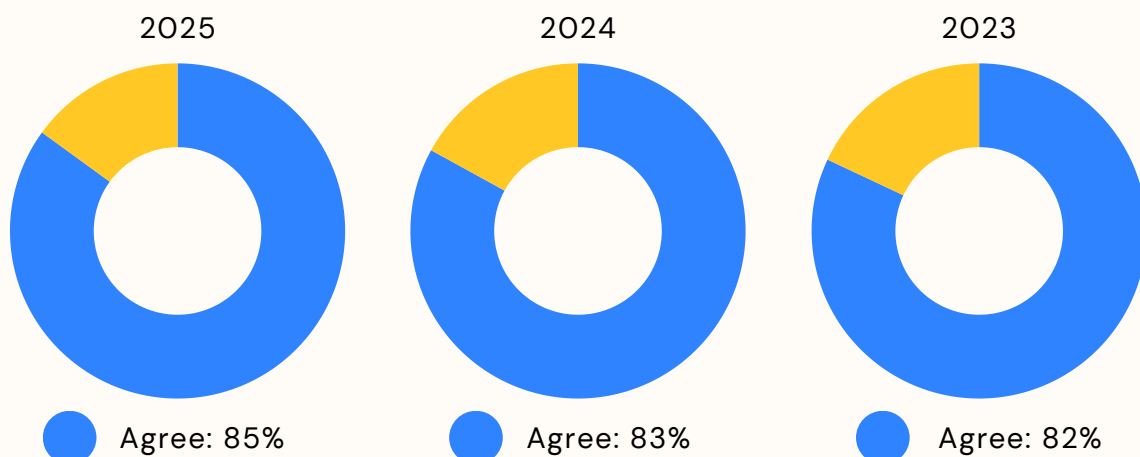
Sample Size: 249



Community pros are seeing clearer wins and outcomes, even if their execs aren't loosening the purse strings.

"Community is critical to our company's mission."

Sample Size: 249



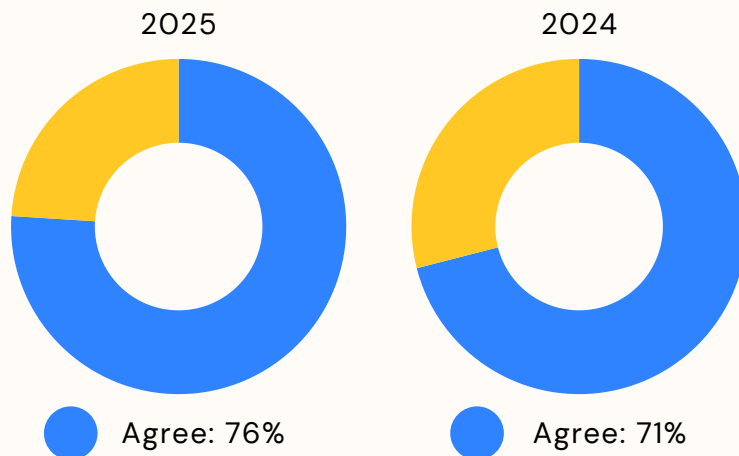
The belief in community's strategic importance is not just consistent, it's intensifying.



Impact and Interest

"I have seen increased interest in community from other departments in my organization in the last 12 months."

Sample Size: 248



Cross-functional enthusiasm is strong, but may be nearing a plateau. Without renewed investment, momentum could stall before it turns into lasting buy-in.

What we're seeing here: Community is more valued than ever, just not better funded.

Community teams are more confident than ever in their value. Belief in community's impact, importance, and internal relevance is all trending upward—especially among those doing the work. But this rising sentiment isn't matched by rising budgets. The disconnect between perceived value and actual investment continues to grow. The question isn't whether community matters—it's whether companies are ready to resource it accordingly.



The Business of Community



In this section, we dive deep into the heart of community's strategic value: how it ties into core business outcomes. The goal? To better understand how community teams are aligning with broader organizational priorities—and whether those efforts are translating into measurable results.

While community has long been seen as a powerful driver of connection, belonging, and advocacy, the pressure to prove ROI has never been higher. This section surfaces the top business goals community leaders are focused on. It also reveals the metrics they rely on to track progress and what portion of teams are now able to tie community efforts directly to revenue.

What you'll find in this section:

The SPACES Model

- CMX's model to standardize proving ROI and proving business value

Business Objectives and Metrics

- Popular metrics communities are using to track business objectives• What else is in it

Quantifying Community Value

- How communities are finding success in impacting business goals
- How communities are quantifying community value
- How much business value communities are driving

Measuring Community Health

- Popular metrics communities are using to measure their community's health

The SPACES Model™

Communities may look different across industries, but the business value they drive often falls into a few core categories.

At CMX, we use the SPACES model to define these categories. It's built on our work with hundreds of companies and shaped by insights from the community professionals we serve.

S

Support for customers/users

(e.g. members answer questions for each other)

P

Product feedback

(e.g. get Ideas from members on how to Improve the product)

A

Acquisition/marketing

(e.g. use the community for leads, new customers, brand advocates)

C

Content creation

(e.g. members create content to help the community)

E

External engagement/retention

(e.g. increase customer loyalty and retention)

S

Success of customer/user success

(e.g. customers provide education and teach each other how to best use the product)

Check out CMX's
Three Level Framework
to learn more about
implementing
The SPACES Model!

The Three Level
Framework

Business Objectives and Metrics

We asked respondents to identify their primary business objectives—and then choose the top one they're focused on. This gives us a clearer picture of how community teams are positioning their work within the larger goals of the organization.

Which is your **top** business objective for your community?

Sample Size: 245



What we're seeing here: The priorities are holding steady.

We're not seeing major shifts year over year—support, success, and acquisition remain the top business objectives for most community teams. It's a clear sign that community continues to play a central role across the customer journey.

Business Objectives and Metrics

Which metrics do you use to measure the business impact of your primary objective?

Sample Size: 238

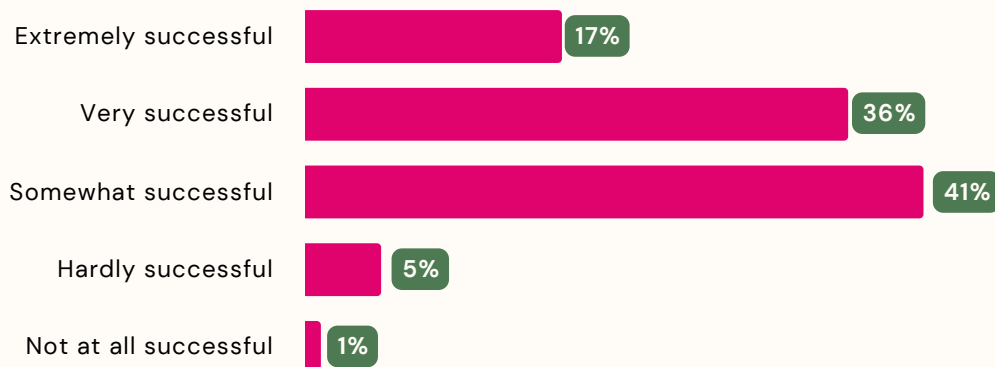
Objective	Top Metrics
S Customer/user support	Active users (41%) Case deflection (38%) Customer satisfaction (36%) Cost savings (30%)
P Product feedback	Product ideas (71%) Feature adoption (36%) New user/member signup (14%) Customer satisfaction (29%)
A Marketing/sales/user acquisition	New customers (58%) New prospects or leads (38%) Active users (34%) Revenue influenced by community efforts (34%) New user/member signup (26%)
C Content creation	New user-generated content (47%) Conversation engagement (27%) New user/member signup (27%) Change in revenue (27%) Cost savings (27%)
E Customer retention	Customer retention (72%) Customer satisfaction (49%) Active users (47%) New user/member signup (38%) Conversation engagement (34%)
S Customer/user success	Active users (43%) Conversation engagement (37%) Customer satisfaction (35%) Customer Retention (31%) Net Promoter Score (31%)

Quantifying Community Value

In this subsection, we look at who's able to financially quantify community's impact—and how much value they believe it's brought to the business in the past year.

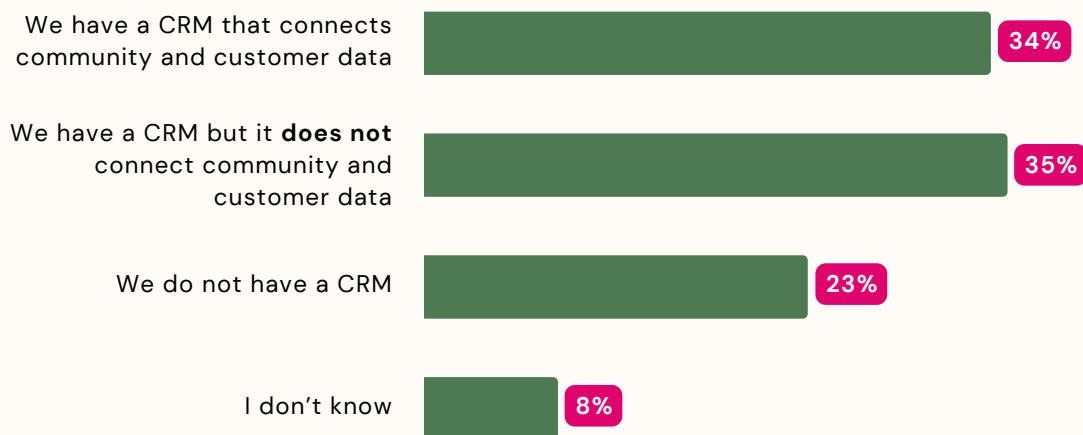
How successful do you consider your community to be at impacting business goals?

Sample Size: 337



Does your community data connect to your company's CRM?

Sample Size: 251




What we're seeing here: CRM access isn't enough—connection matters.

While a whopping 94% of respondents say their communities are at least somewhat successful, only 17% rate them as extremely successful. Yet 69% of teams report having a CRM, and just under half of those have it connected to community data. The gap suggests that simply having a CRM isn't moving the needle—integrating it with community data might be the real differentiator. We explore cross-tabulated data on the next page.

Quantifying Community Value

We cross-tabulated responses to see if there's a relationship between perceived success and CRM integration. Specifically, we compared how respondents rated their community's success at impacting business goals based on whether or not their community data connects to their company's CRM.



	How successful do you consider your community to be at impacting business goals?			
	Extremely Successful	Very Successful	Somewhat Successful	Hardly Successful
We have a CRM that connects community and customer data	24%	44%	28%	3%
We have a CRM but it does not connect community and customer data	11%	33%	47%	9%

What we're seeing here: Data is the difference.

Community teams with CRM-connected data are seeing and feeling more success. They're twice as likely to rate their impact as "extremely successful" (24%) compared to teams with systems that are not connected (11.5%). And only 3.5% described their success as minimal, compared to over 9% in the unconnected group.

The takeaway? Teams that can integrate community and customer data appear more confident in their business impact—likely because they're better equipped to measure and prove it.

Get certified with
CMX Academy and learn
how to prove the
business value of your
community!

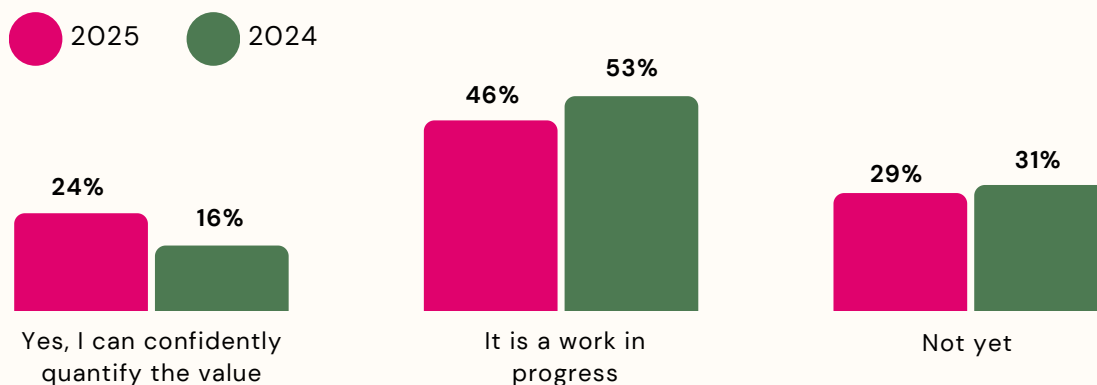
The Community
MBA



Quantifying Community Value

Are you able to financially quantify the business value of your community?

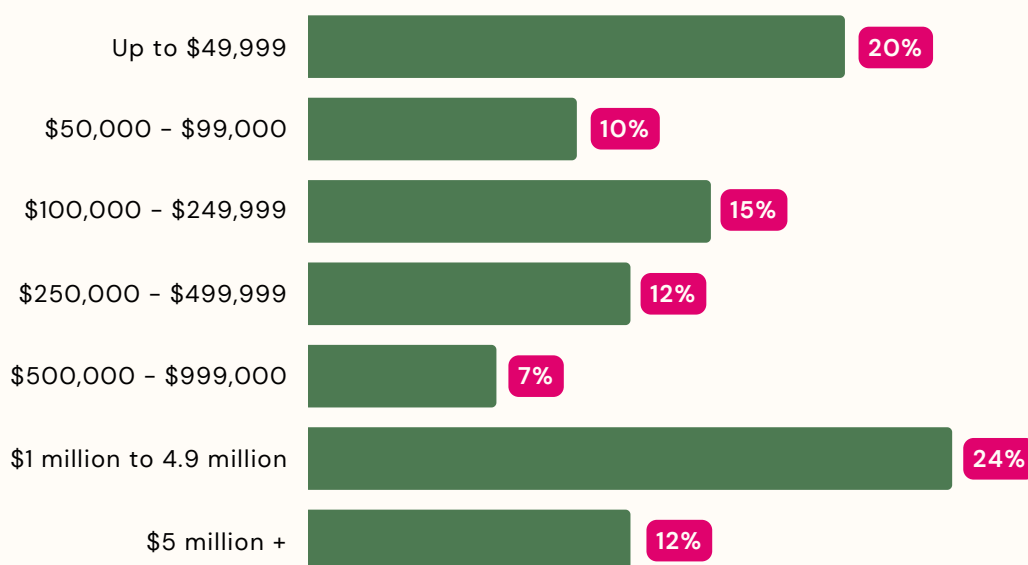
Sample Size: 243



The 24% of respondents who answered “Yes, I can confidently quantify the value” were then asked the following question.

How much monetary business value has your community provided to the organization in the past 12 months?

Sample Size: 59



What we’re seeing here: The ROI story is getting clearer.

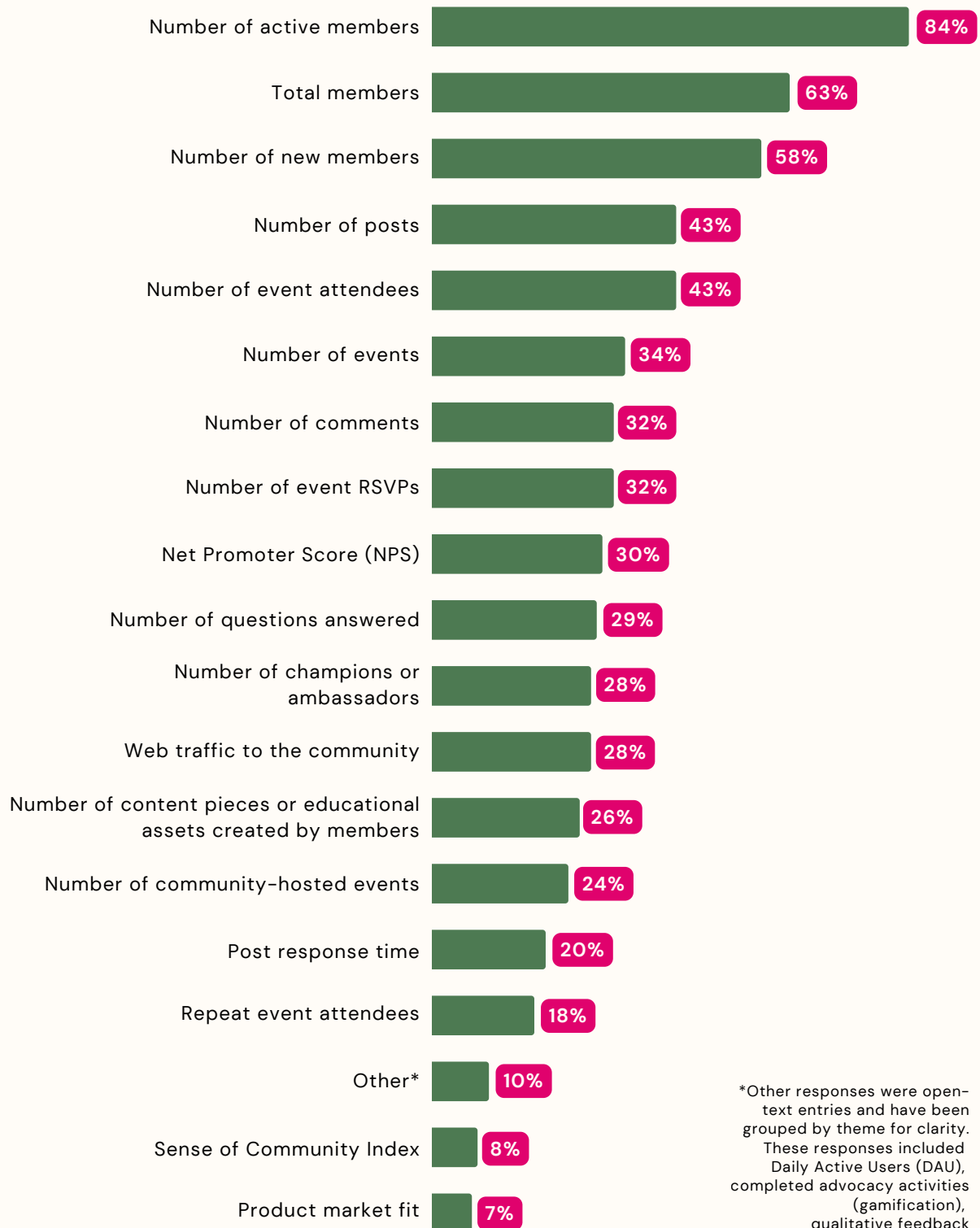
More teams are proving community’s business impact. A record 24% can now quantify its value—and nearly half of those report over \$1M in impact. The rest are still building the case, but momentum is growing.

Measuring Community Health

Beyond business impact, we wanted to know how teams are gauging community health. This section shares the top metrics being used to evaluate community performance, from engagement rates to sentiment scores and member growth.

What metric do you use to measure the health of your community?

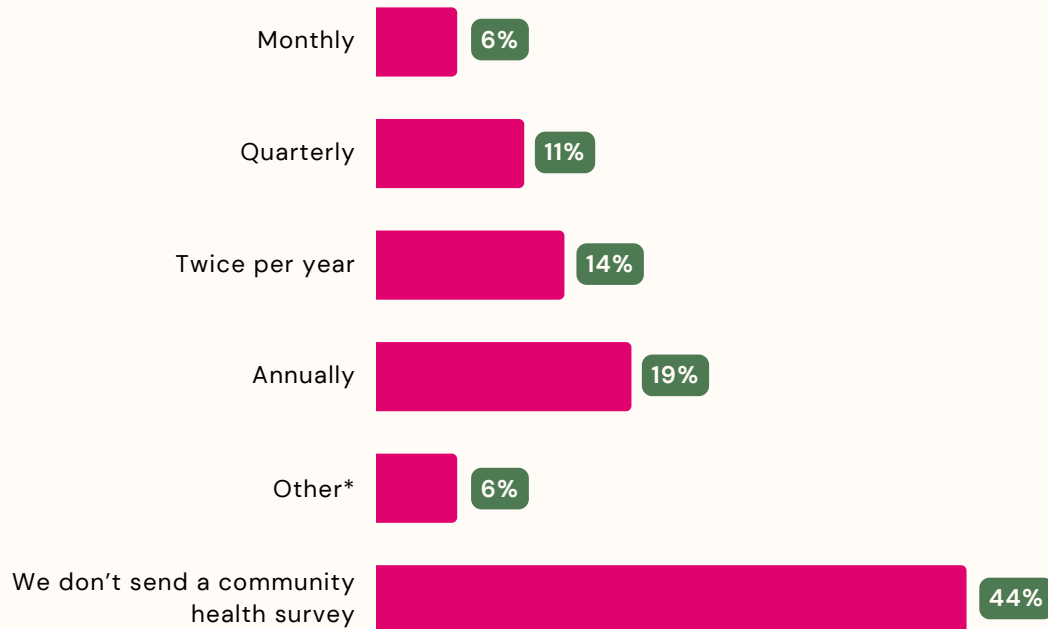
Sample Size: 250



Measuring Community Health

How often do you send a community health survey to your members?

Sample Size: 248



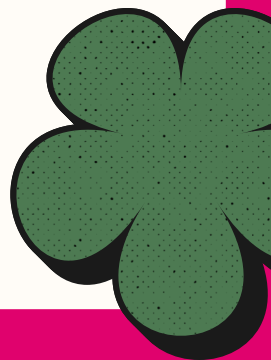
What we're seeing here: Listening habits lag behind impact goals.

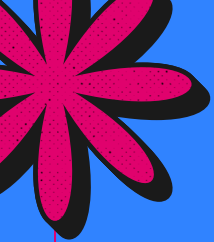
Despite growing pressure to measure and prove community value, nearly half of respondents still aren't surveying their members about community health. That's a significant gap in member feedback—and a missed opportunity to better understand what's working (and what's not).

Annual surveys remain the most common cadence, but we're seeing a slight uptick in more frequent check-ins, like biannual and monthly surveys. It's a small shift, but one that points toward more real-time feedback loops and stronger listening practices.

**Check out how we run
Community health
surveys at CMX!**

**Health Surveys
at CMX**





Community Budget Trends

In this section, we dive into one of the most pressing topics for community professionals: budget. We asked those with visibility into their team's finances how their budgets have changed, what's driving those shifts, and where the biggest challenges lie. You'll find data on budget increases and cuts, the reasons behind them, and the obstacles teams face in securing and managing resources.

This is the first year we asked about budget in detail—and the responses were powerful. From ROI struggles to organizational priorities, this section offers a clear picture of how community work is being funded today, and what pros are doing to advocate for more.

What you'll find in this section:

The State of Community Budgets

- Budget increases and decreases

Budget Challenges

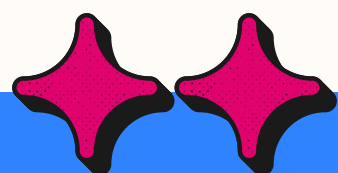
- What budget challenges community professionals are facing

Looking Ahead

- How community professionals foresee their budgets changing

Advice from Community Professionals

- The top themes from over 100 respondents
- Direct quotes

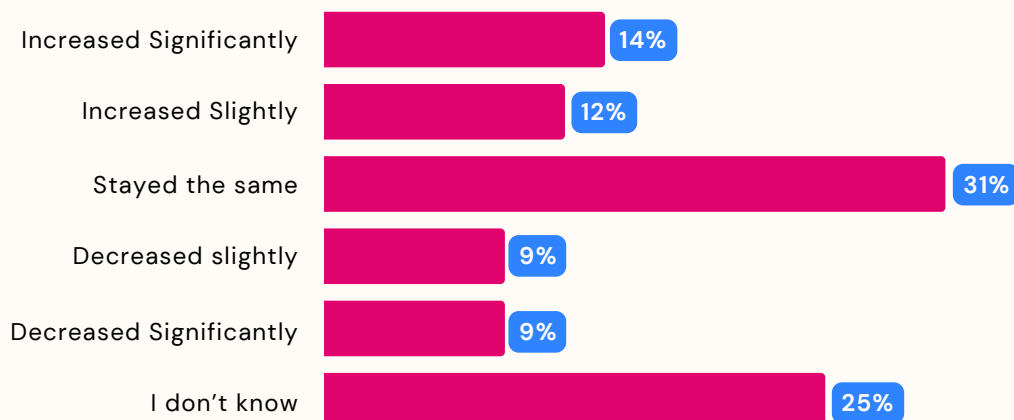


The State of Community Budgets

We asked respondents whether they have visibility into their community team's budget. Only those who said yes continued to answer questions in this section. We asked how their budget has changed compared to last year, and why. The result is a focused look at where funding is growing, shrinking, or staying the same in 2025.

How has your community budget changed compared to last year?

Sample Size: 257



What we're seeing here: Even when invited in, budget clarity is still out of reach.

Despite opting into the budget section, 25% of respondents still said "I don't know" when asked how their community budget changed this year. That suggests a lingering lack of transparency—even for those expected to have visibility.

Among those who could answer, the most common response was "stayed the same" (31%), pointing to stalled investment for many teams. Still, there are signs of growth: 26% reported budget increases—including 14% who said it grew significantly. Meanwhile, 18% reported budget decreases, suggesting some teams are still navigating cutbacks. This split reflects a field where some community programs are gaining traction—while others remain flat-funded, reduced, or in the dark altogether.

Learn how to align your community's goals with business outcomes and build a clear, actionable strategy.

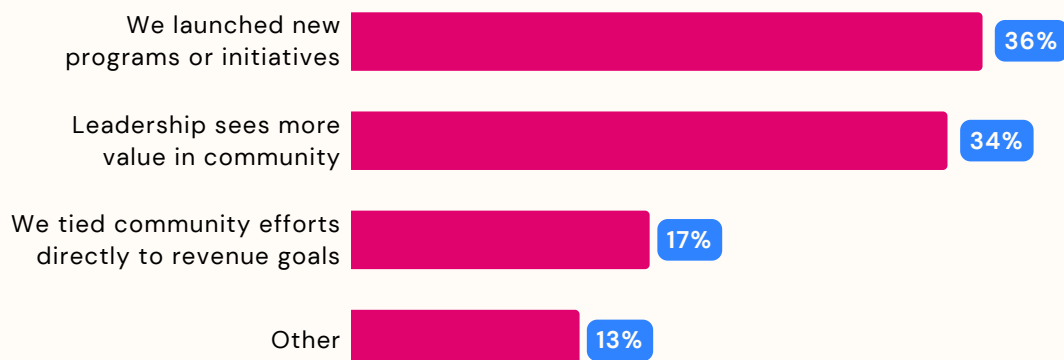
The CMX
Community
Strategy Canvas

The State of Community Budgets

We then asked those who reported a budget increase or decrease to share the reasons behind the change—giving us deeper insight into what’s driving investment in some communities, and cutbacks in others.

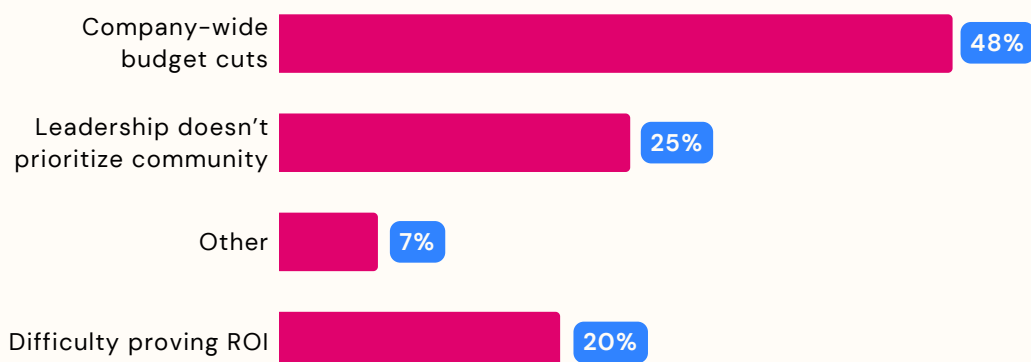
If your budget **increased** this year, what was the primary reason?

Sample Size: 64



If your budget **decreased** this year, what was the primary reason?

Sample Size: 44



What we're seeing here: Community budgets are moving, but not in one direction.

In 2025, about a third of respondents reported budget increases, largely driven by new program launches (36%) and stronger executive buy-in (34%). While only one reason could be selected, the two often go hand in hand: when leadership sees the value, investment tends to follow. Other drivers included platform migrations, major product releases, and membership growth.

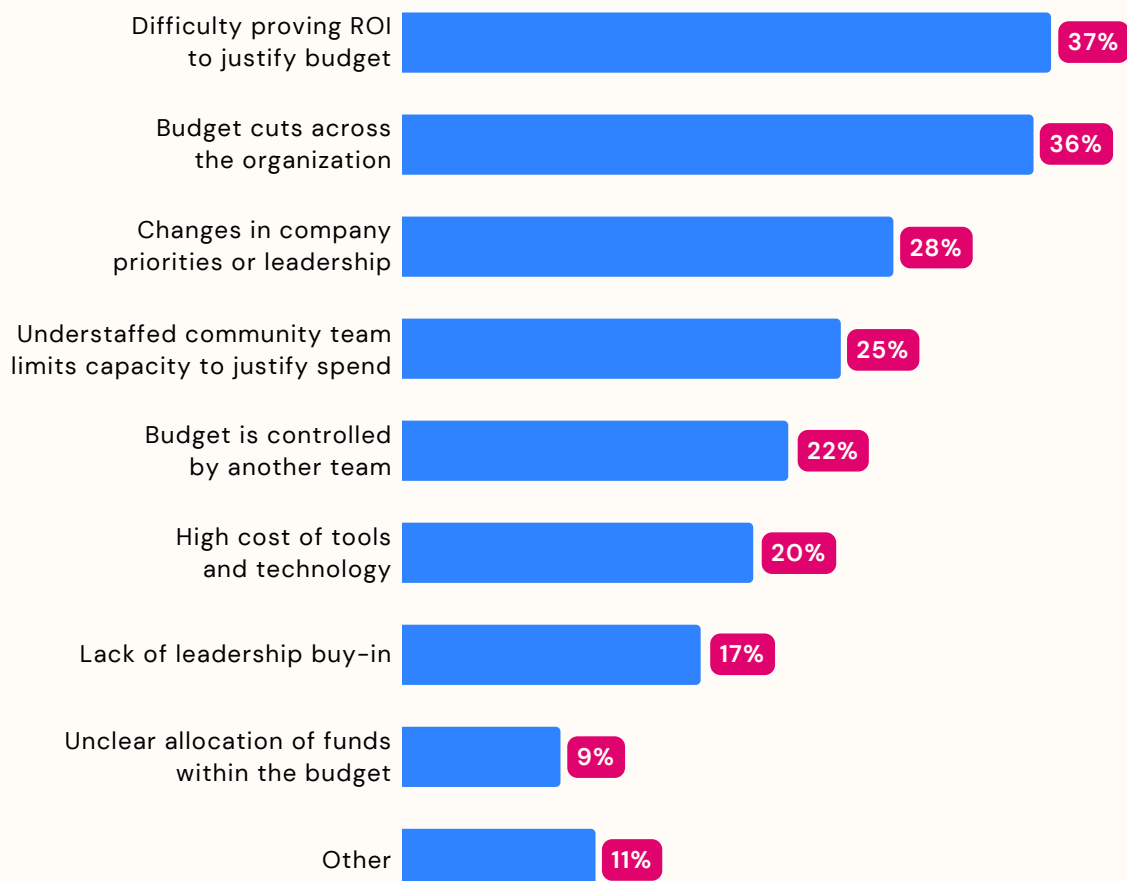
On the flip side, another third reported budget cuts. But most weren't a reflection of community performance—nearly half cited company-wide reductions, while others pointed to factors like expiring grants, global conflict, or internal restructuring. Only about a third pointed to leadership skepticism or challenges proving ROI.

Budget Challenges

We then asked those who reported a budget increase or decrease to share the reasons behind the change—giving us deeper insight into what’s driving investment in some communities, and cutbacks in others. (We dive deeper into budget and other frustrations on page 52).

What are your biggest challenges when it comes to budget?

Sample Size: 244



What we’re seeing here: Budget challenges point to both perception and power.

When it comes to securing or managing community budgets, teams face a mix of internal and external challenges. On one side, 58% of respondents pointed to perception-based hurdles—like difficulty proving ROI, shifting leadership priorities, or lack of executive buy-in. These speak to the ongoing challenge of making the value of community visible to decision-makers.

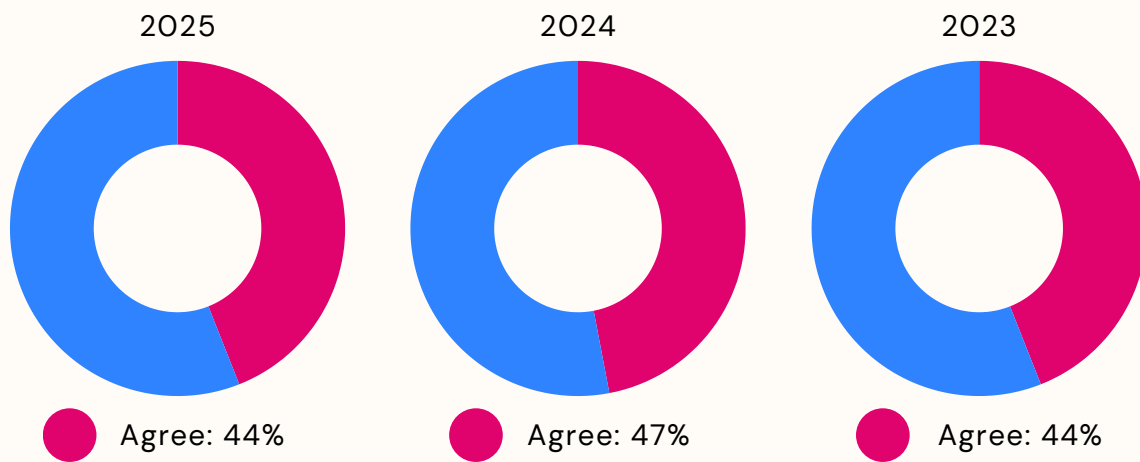
On the other side, 51% selected barriers rooted in broader company dynamics, including org-wide budget cuts or not owning their own line item. Add in tech costs and lean teams, and it’s clear: many community pros are operating in tight conditions, advocating for both recognition and resources.

Looking Ahead

We asked respondents whether they expect their organization to increase investment in community within the next year. This data offers a forward-looking glimpse at how teams are feeling about executive buy-in, momentum, and the road ahead.

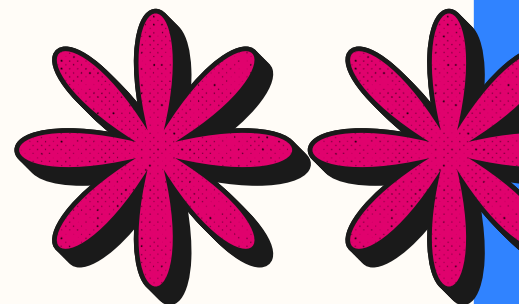
"Our organization will be increasing our investment in community over the next year."

Sample Size: 250



What we're seeing here: Hype has cooled.

After a brief rise in optimism in 2024, expectations around future investment have dropped back to 2023 levels—just 44% of respondents believe their organization will increase budget or headcount for community in the coming year. This mirrors what we heard elsewhere in the data: only a third of teams actually saw budget increases this past year, and many cited internal buy-in and proving ROI as top challenges. The signal is clear—even as community's strategic value grows, teams are still fighting for resources.





Advice from Community Professionals

We asked community professionals to share their best advice for peers looking to increase their budget. Nearly every respondent in this section answered this optional write-in—proving once again that community pros show up for each other. Here's a roundup of the most common themes.

1

Prove ROI and Tie to Business Goals

The most consistent advice: Show the numbers. Demonstrate how community drives revenue, retention, customer lifetime value, or cost savings. This theme appeared in more than half of the responses.

2

Build a Strong Business Case

Many respondents emphasized creating a solid, metrics-backed proposal tailored to leadership priorities—especially using “what-if” budget scenarios.

3

Tell Impactful Stories

A recurring message: Data gets attention, but stories make it stick. Sharing member anecdotes or community wins helped others secure buy-in.

4

Align with Strategic Priorities

Tie your ask to broader org goals—whether that's product feedback, customer success, or marketing. Integration makes funding easier to justify.

5

Be Visible and Persistent

Respondents recommended consistently sharing wins, aligning with other departments, and not waiting for permission to advocate for more resources.

6

Find Internal or External Champions

Whether it's cross-functional partners or external sponsors, several pros recommended bringing in allies to strengthen the case for funding.

Advice from Community Professionals

Sometimes the best insights come straight from the source. These direct quotes capture the wisdom, grit, and generosity of community pros supporting one another. From proving ROI to rallying internal champions, this page is filled with real-world advice from those doing the work.

"Align your value with organizational goals and make sure you are integrating your community program with every department. Without this integration, you are a stand-alone which is difficult to fund."
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"Tie your goals to business outcomes, back it with data, and start with a pilot to prove value. A clear, visual proposal—plus a few strong advocates—can go a long way." – Survey Respondent (2025)

"Make sure to do weekly reports on what the community is working on. Visibility for its impact is very important and should always reach C-suite people. **Continuously share the numbers but also the anecdotal wins to your entire company, not just your boss.**"
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"My advice is to **connect the community's impact directly to business results using clear metrics.** I usually prepare an analysis showing different scenarios based on varying budget levels needed to achieve specific goals, and present it concisely to my stakeholders."
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"Learn how to be an internal politician, and know how to sell your community to colleagues who control resources that your program needs. This especially applies to R&D teams who can benefit from your community's product/tech rich input." – Survey Respondent (2025)

"Most leaders tell you they want data, graphs, numbers, but the only thing that has worked for me is telling the stories of where community made a direct impact. **Lead with impactful stories to showcase what is happening now, then use data to help them see what the future could be.**" – Survey Respondent (2025)



The Community Professional



Community isn't just a strategy—it's a career. This section explores the lived experience of the professionals behind the programs: the people who build, manage, and grow communities every day. We look at how job security, career satisfaction, and everyday challenges are evolving in a rapidly changing industry. As teams shrink, goals stretch, and expectations mount, how are community professionals feeling about their work—and their future?

We asked community pros about layoffs, burnout, their desire to stay in the field, and what's most frustrating about the job right now. This is a pulse check on the humans behind the metrics.

What you'll find in this section:

Layoffs and Job Security

- How/if our respondents were impacted by layoffs
- Concerns about future layoffs

Job Satisfaction

- Satisfaction with the current state of career
- How respondents are feeling about the future of their career in the industry

Frustrations

- Top community-related frustrations

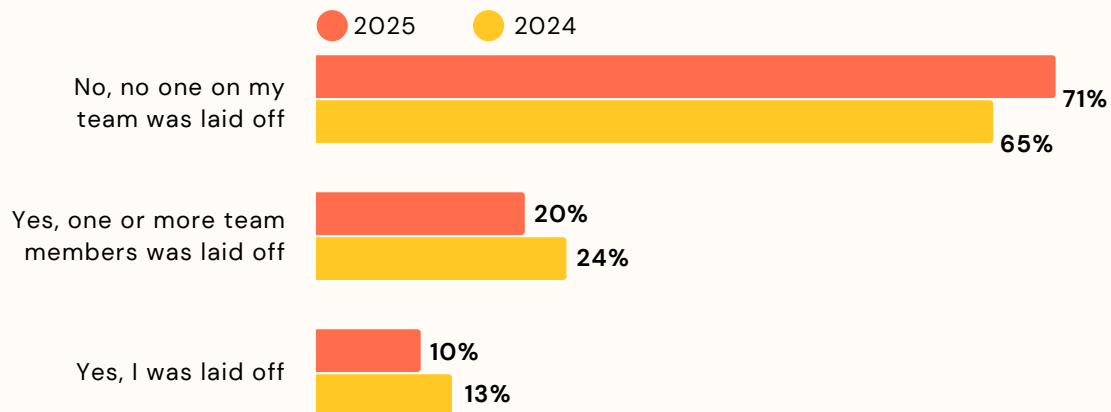


Layoffs and Job Security

After years of explosive growth, community teams have faced a wave of restructuring. Here, we explore the current state of job security in the community industry. Are community professionals starting to feel more stable again, or are we still in a state of uncertainty?

Were you or your team affected by layoffs in the past 12 months?

Sample Size: 365

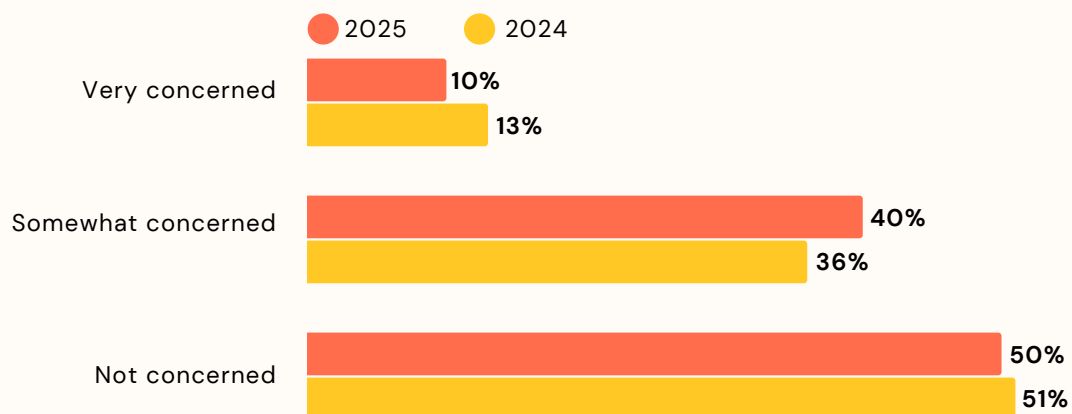


What we're seeing here: Cautious optimism as cuts decline.

While not a dramatic shift, the data points to a slight decrease in job loss—and a softening of the uncertainty that's loomed over the profession in recent years. Half of respondents said they're not concerned about losing their job, holding steady from last year. Fewer are very concerned (down to 10% from 13%), though somewhat concerned rose slightly. It's a mixed signal—but one that suggests panic is easing, even if unease hasn't disappeared.

How concerned are you about losing your job within the next year?

Sample Size: 298



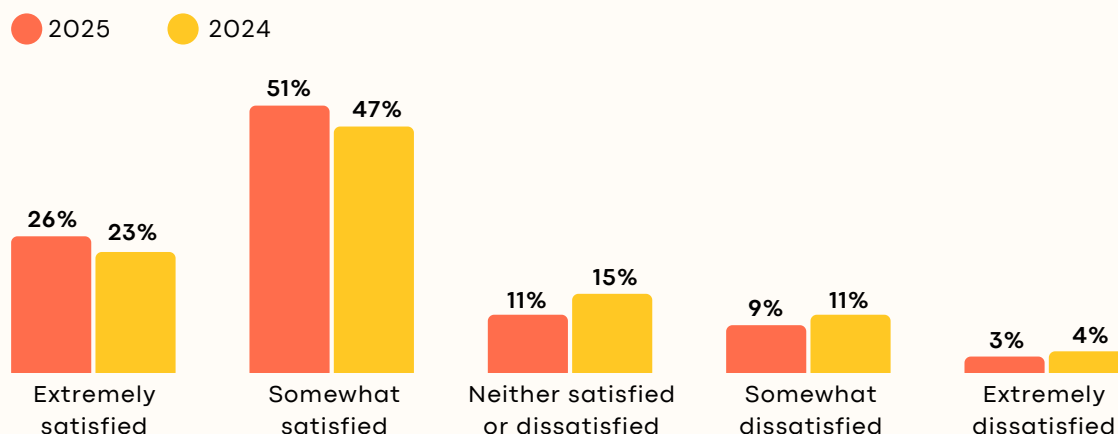


Job Satisfaction

This section explores how community professionals feel about their long-term future in the industry. Are they energized and invested in the work, or feeling stagnant and eyeing other paths? Combined, these questions offer a window into morale, burnout, and how sustainable community work feels today.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the current state of your career as a community professional?

Sample Size: 366

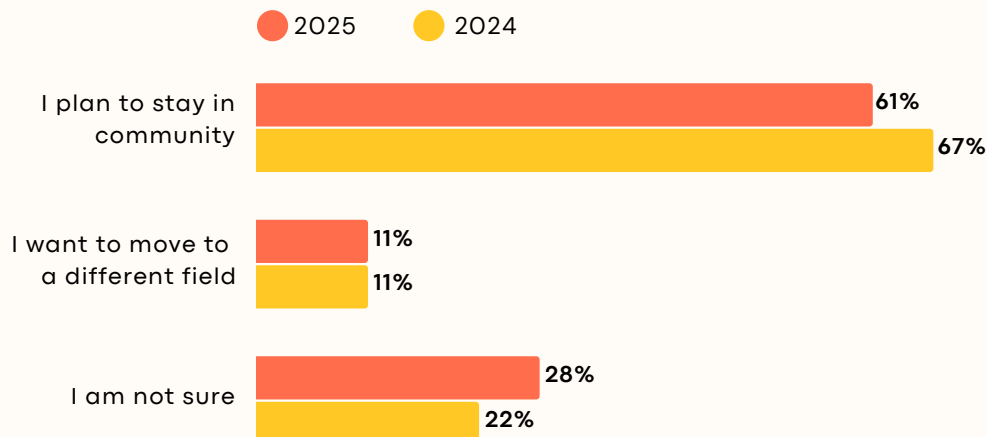


What we're seeing here: Satisfaction is rising, but commitment is softening.

Career satisfaction is trending upward, with more community pros feeling good about their roles. But fewer are confident they'll stay in the field, and uncertainty is on the rise. Even as morale improves, long-term commitment may depend on clearer growth paths and stronger support.

Do you think you will still be a community professional in the next 2 years or do you plan to move to a different field?

Sample Size: 366





Frustrations

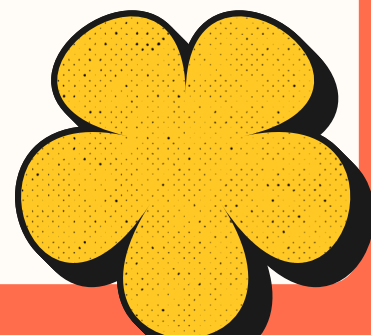
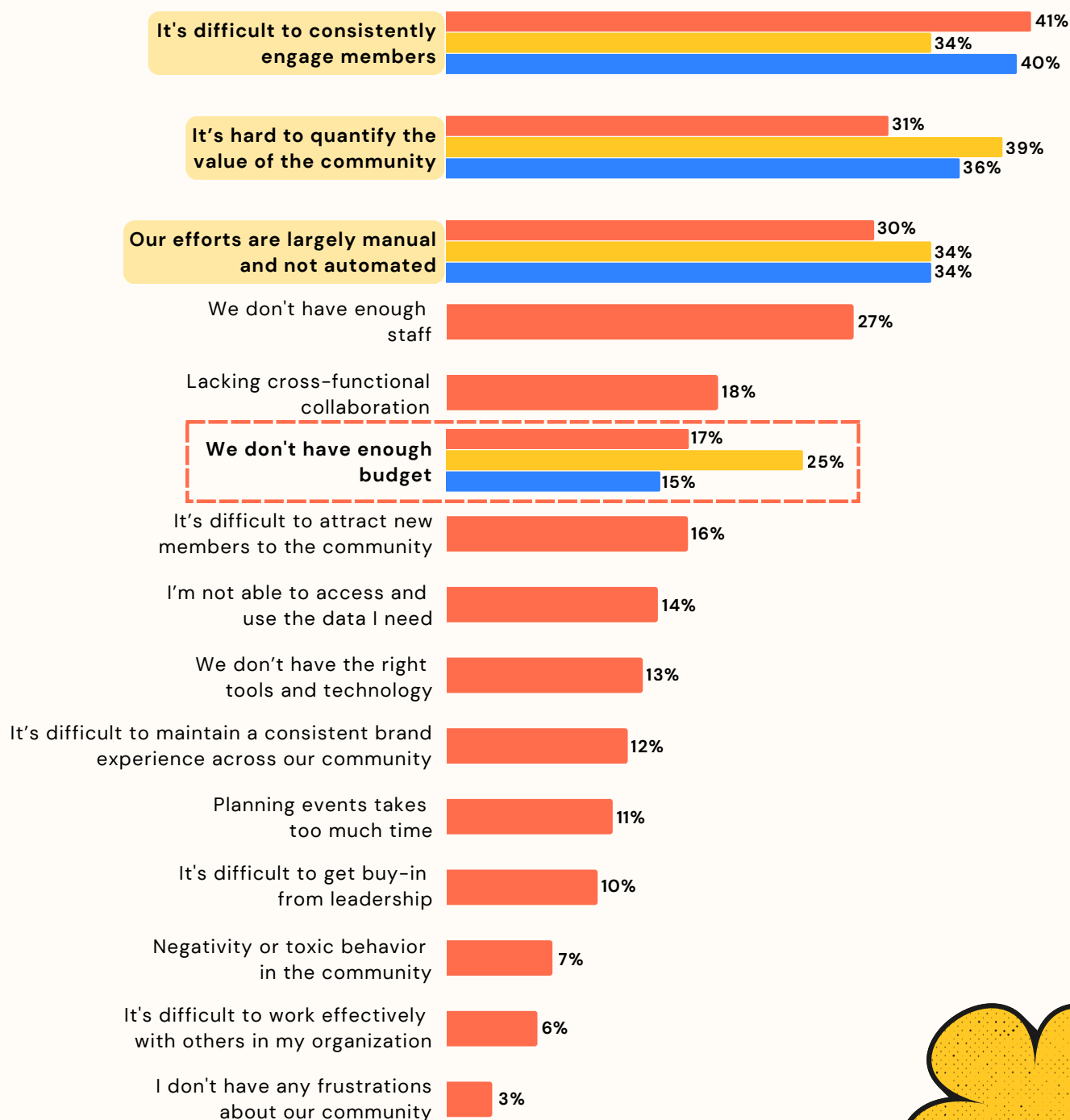
The top three frustrations have remained consistent since 2020, with quantifying value and consistently engaging members trading places for the top spot. In 2025, engagement took the lead again, rising to 41%. More about frustrations around budget on the next page.

What are your top frustrations about managing your community and its activities? Select up to 3.

Sample Size: 251

● 2025 ● 2024 ● 2024

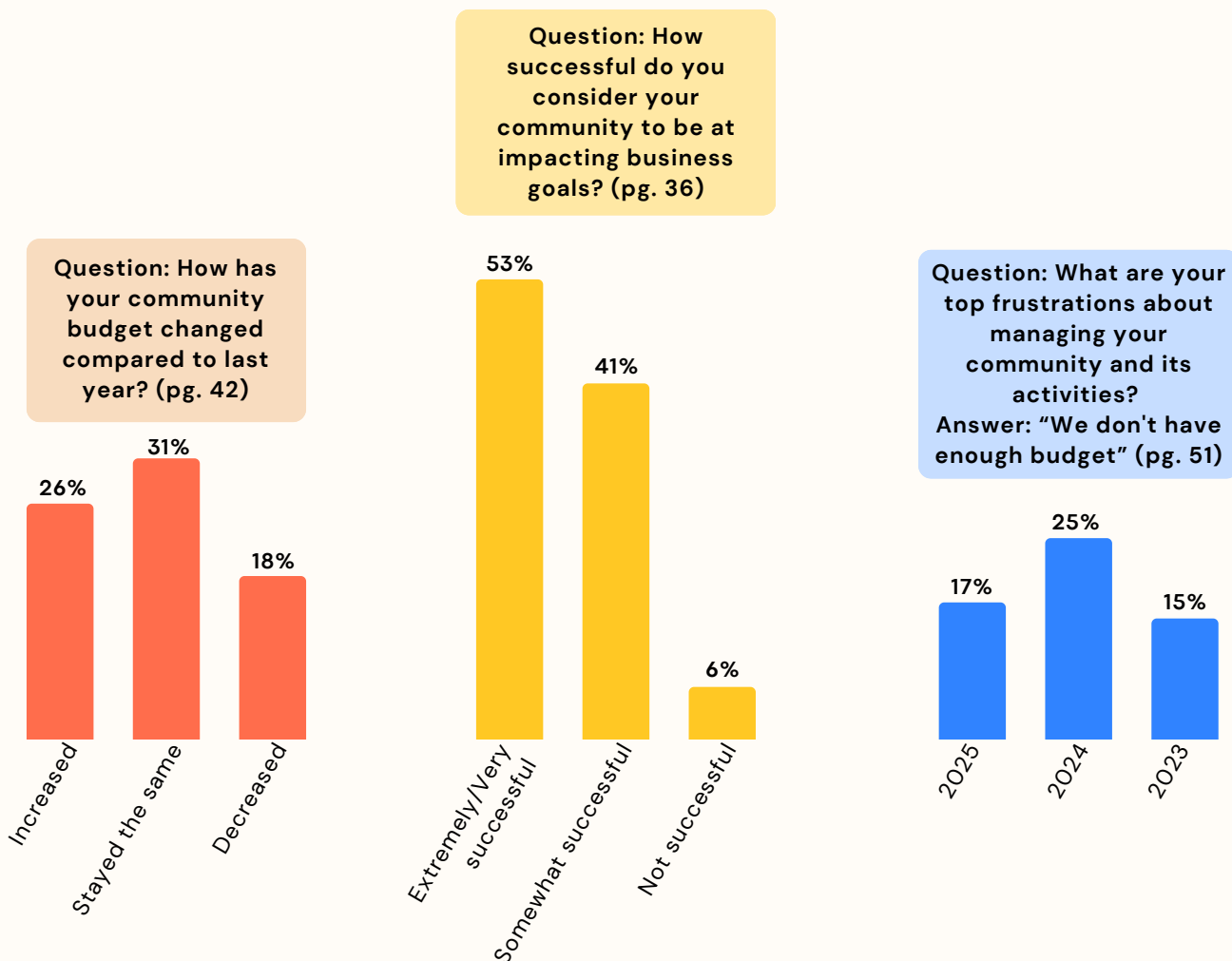
*Only notable year-over-year changes are highlighted



Frustrations

How budget changes, success perception, and frustration intersect

A comparison of responses across three questions on budgets, impact, and resourcing pain points



Frustration around budget dropped to 17% this year, down from 25% in 2024. But that shift doesn't appear to be tied to any major funding gains—only 26% of teams saw a budget increase, and most reported flat or reduced resources (pg. 39).

What may be changing is confidence: 53% of respondents said their community is very or extremely successful at driving business goals (pg. 28). That growing sense of impact could be easing frustration, even if resources haven't grown to match.

In other words: teams might still be underfunded—but they're feeling more certain that the work matters.



Community and Technology



The rise of AI is reshaping every corner of work—including community. But how is it actually showing up in community roles today? This is the second year we've explored AI adoption, and in this section, we look at how professionals are using these tools, what's holding others back, and how the community industry feels about the road ahead.

We also zoomed out to understand the broader tech landscape—asking respondents to share more about the software powering their communities. From content generation to moderation, AI is starting to support a range of day-to-day tasks. Adoption is still in the early stages, with many pros feeling curious but cautious. So how do people really feel? Excited? Hesitant? Hopeful? Across the board, one thing is clear: AI is here, and the community world is just beginning to figure out what that means.

What you'll find in this section:

Community tech Stacks

- How many different software tools are community teams using

AI use in Community

- How Community Pros are using AI

Sentiment around AI

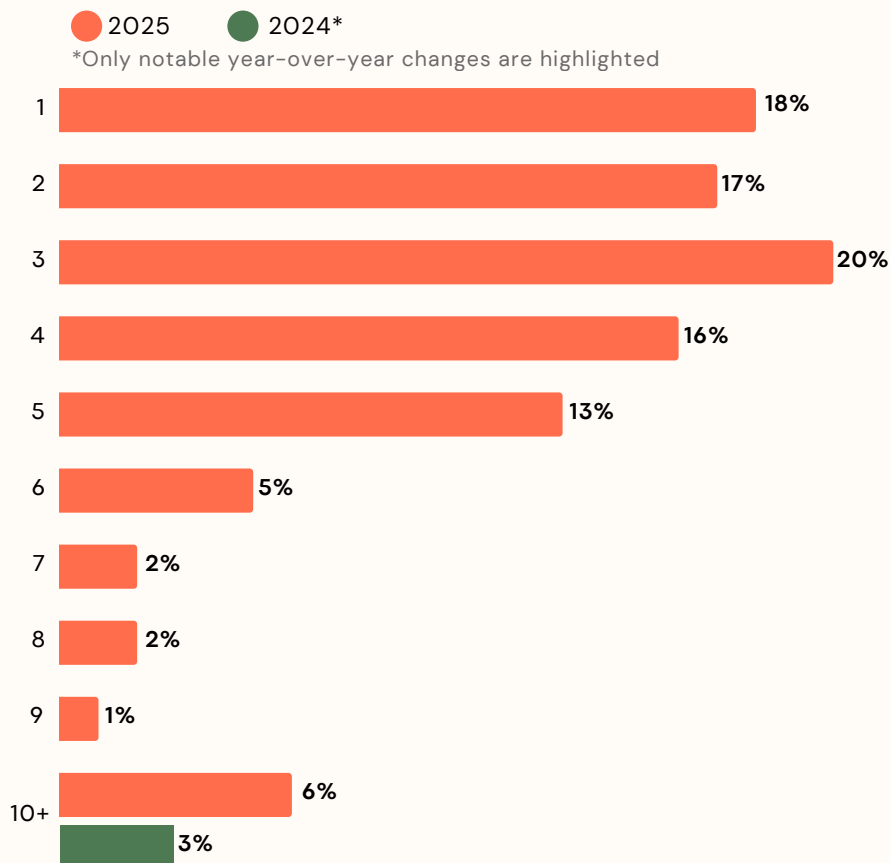
- How Community Pros feel about AI
- The perception of impact

Community Tech Stacks

We asked respondents to share a little bit more about the software they are using in their communities.

Approximately how many different softwares or tools do you have in your tech stack for your community

Sample Size: 223



What we're seeing here: Some stacks are getting big.

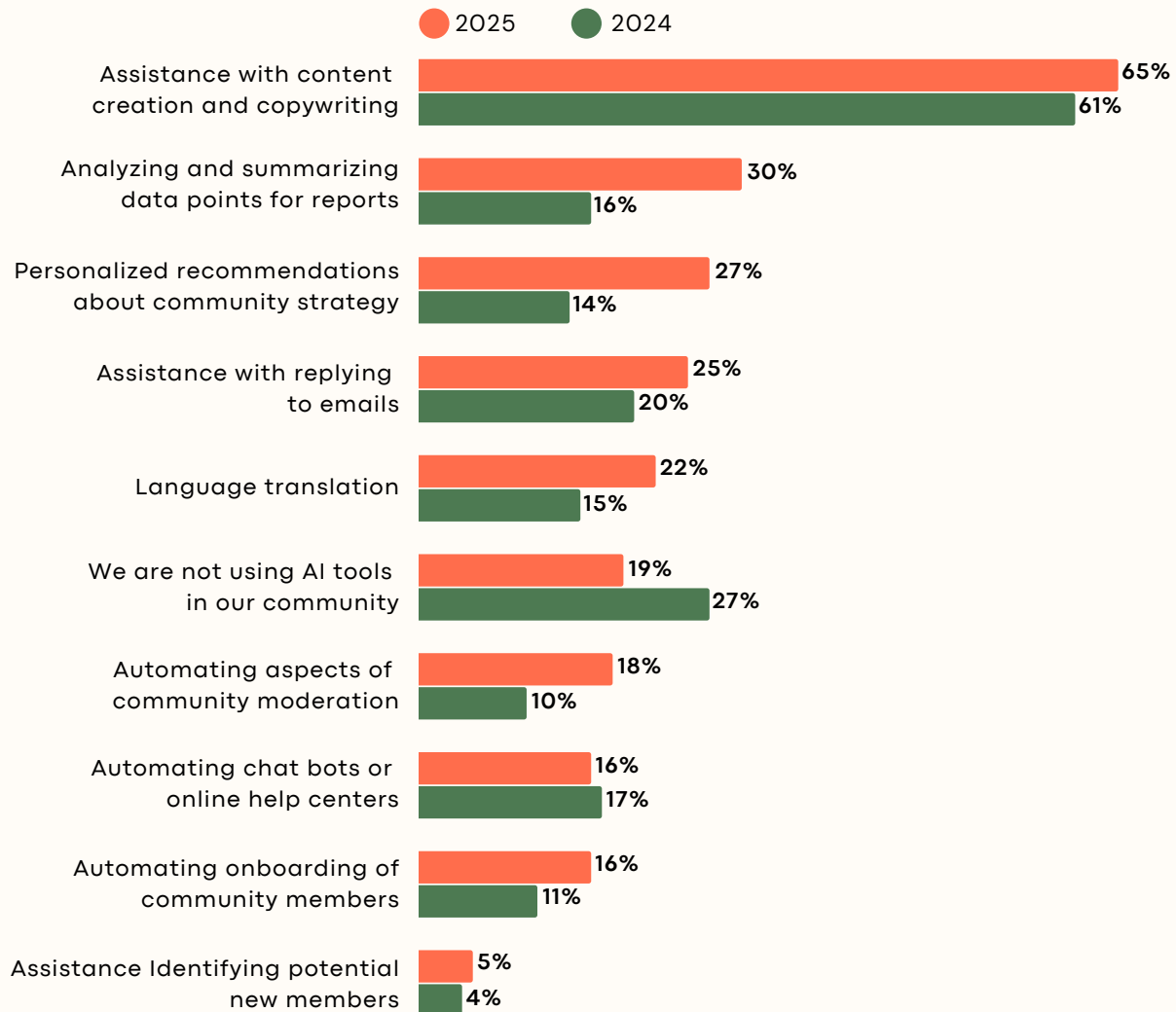
While most teams still use between 1–5 tools (covering 85% of respondents), we're seeing a small but notable rise in those using large, complex stacks. The percentage of teams using 10 or more tools doubled from 3% in 2024 to 6% in 2025. That might suggest some communities are becoming more sophisticated—or more fragmented—as they try to integrate AI, analytics, and automation alongside legacy tools.

AI use in Community

This section outlines where AI is actively being used, and why some professionals are still holding off.

How are you using AI tools to support your community?

Sample Size: 248



What we're seeing here: AI is moving from assistant to advisor.

In 2025, 81% of respondents said they're using AI tools to support their community, up from 73% last year. The most common use case remains content creation and copywriting (65%), but we're seeing strong growth in more strategic applications. Use of AI for community strategy (14% → 27%) and for analyzing and summarizing data (16% → 30%) nearly doubled.

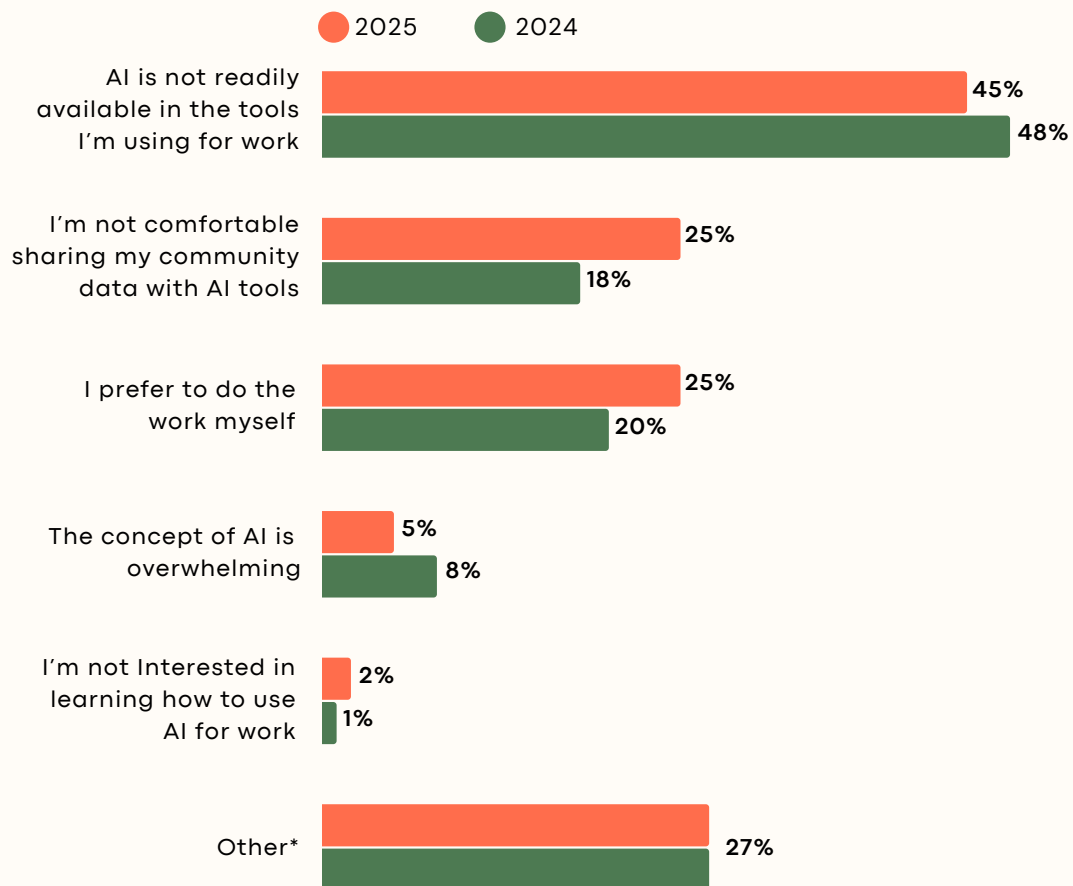
Other areas of growth include onboarding automation, moderation, translation, and email support. These shifts suggest AI is moving beyond simple task automation into more high-leverage, decision-support roles. With more pros tapping AI for insights and reporting, it's becoming less of a novelty—and more of a true partner in community work.

AI use in Community

While the number of respondents not using AI tools dropped from 27% to 19% this year, many professionals still have reasons for holding off. We asked those who aren't using AI in their work to share why.

Why aren't you using AI tools in your work as a community professional?

Sample Size: 47



* Written responses Included on next page

What we're seeing here: Adoption is rising, but trust hasn't caught up.

Despite increased adoption, some community professionals are still hesitant to embrace AI. The most common blocker remains availability—45% said AI isn't readily built into the tools they're using. But a growing number of respondents expressed discomfort with sharing community data with AI tools, rising from 18% in 2024 to 25% this year. That increase points to persistent concerns around data privacy, ownership, and trust.



AI use in Community

We gave respondents the option to share their own reasons for not using AI tools in their community work—and the written responses added valuable nuance. These responses were open-text entries and have been

"We don't have the budget to buy AI tools to help with community"
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"The problematic, ethical, and environmental implications of AI tools conflict with our mission as a non-profit organization."
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"The environmental cost of AI is largely ignored, and it makes me very uncomfortable to just start using more energy when I don't see a clear purpose for doing so."
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"AI is a risk to our model of peer-to-peer support"
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"AI still isn't a fully baked technology. It misses a lot of subtle nuances of human expression."
– Survey Respondent (2025)

"The team prefers to work without AI"
– Survey Respondent (2025)

Sentiment around AI

It's clear that most respondents are eager to explore how AI can support their work. Next we asked respondents about their feelings around AI and the impact they think it will have on the industry.

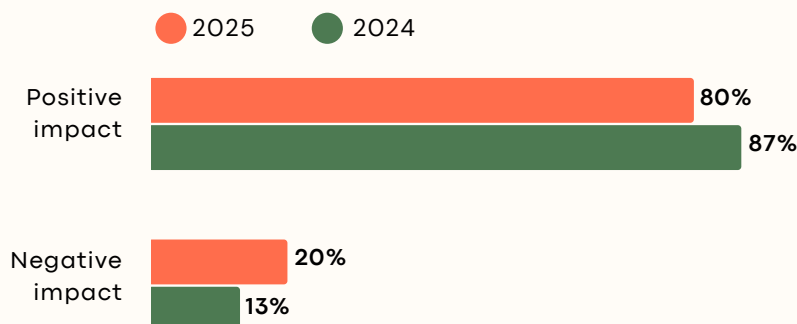
Are you excited to learn more about how AI will impact your work as a community professional?

Sample Size: 251



Do you think AI is more likely to have a positive or a negative impact on the community industry within the next 3 years?

Sample Size: 204



What we're seeing here: Optimism is still strong—but cooling slightly.

While most community pros still believe AI will have a positive impact on the industry (80%), that number has dipped from 87% last year. The rise in belief that AI could have a negative impact suggests that as the technology becomes more integrated, professionals are thinking more critically about its trade-offs—not just its potential.



Sentiment around AI

Why do you think AI will have a positive impact on community?

"AI is king with regards to summarizing large amounts of community response data and delivering sentiment across free-response answers. Program leaders are the human touch for members, but AI is the machine that delivers the data and ROI back to internal management."

- Community Manager, in the industry for 3-4 years

"Used in the right way, AI can have extreme amounts of value for showing the business impact of community and it can enhance the customer and community experience."

- Community Director, in the industry for 10+ years

"AI can optimize repetitive tasks, freeing us to focus on what truly matters: building authentic bonds and connections with people, something no automation can replace."

- Community Manager, in the industry for 5-7 years

Why do you think AI will have a negative impact on community?

"In our community, AI tools are already hindering communication between members. We have seen examples of community members using AI to generate forum posts that contain misinformation and distort users' intended meanings, resulting in conflict with other users and increased levels of anger and frustration within the community. This increased level of conflict—combined with the length and quantity of these posts—can easily overwhelm our small moderation team."

- Community Manager, in the industry for 10+ years

"I think over-reliance on AI by some community professionals will decrease the quality of content they create, and I think the assumption that AI can do tasks now done by community professionals will weaken financial support from our companies and increase job insecurity."

- Community Associate, in the industry for 1-2 years

"AI is contributing to a rise in inauthentic content. This will discourage people from participating in online communities"

- Community Manager, in the industry for 8-9 years

What Comes Next?

Support from CMX

Our mission at CMX is to advance the community industry and help professional community builders thrive. We do that through free online community spaces, training courses and certifications, virtual and in-person events, a job board, and lots of content like this report!

If you're building community or curious about building community, we're here for you! All are welcome at CMX. We wouldn't exist without our incredible members.



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Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the community professionals and members of the CMX Community for participating in this year's survey and sharing your experiences. Your insights are the heart of this research, and we're deeply grateful for the time and thought you contributed.

A special thank you to Michele Linn at Mantis Research, who supported the data analysis. Her expertise helped shape the findings into a clear, compelling narrative.

Huge thanks to Beth McIntyre, our Director of Community, who led this project from start to finish—building the survey, driving participation, analyzing the data with Michele, and leading the creation and design of the final report.

And finally, thank you to John Martin Tan, who created the original design template.

Thank you to our sponsors for helping
make this survey possible!



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Thank you to our incredible partners and community members for amplifying the survey and providing thoughtful feedback throughout the reporting process.



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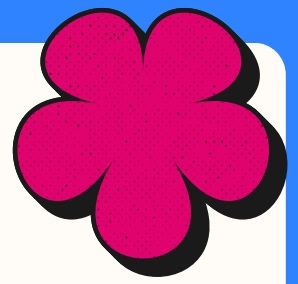


Piper Wilson



Yurii Lazaruk

A Final Note from Beth



Thank you for reading the 2025 CMX Community Industry Report!

This year's data paints a complex picture—teams are stretched thin, budgets are under pressure, and proving impact is still a major challenge. But through it all, community professionals continue to show up with creativity, care, and commitment. You're experimenting with AI, reigniting in-person events, and finding new ways to scale your work—even when resources don't always scale with it.

I've done my best to highlight the biggest shifts and stories shaping our industry, but I know I didn't cover everything. If this report left you wanting more—if there's a question you wish we'd asked or a trend you think we missed—I'd love to hear from you. Your feedback helps us make each year's report stronger and more representative of the full spectrum of community work.

Drop your thoughts in this [quick feedback form](#), and we'll use them to shape next year's survey.

Thanks for being part of this community. I'm consistently impressed by the people in this industry and the work you do—often behind the scenes, often without enough support, and always with heart. I'm so grateful for the work you do.

—Beth



A black ink signature of Beth McIntyre.

Beth McIntyre

Director of Community
Bevy/CMX

Help shape next
year's survey and
report! Share your
feedback.

Fill out the Survey
and Report
Feedback Form





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