

Community Dōjō

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDES

A project of the [Autodesk Group Network](#)

August 2020



A dōjō is a place for immersive learning

autodesk.communitydojo.net

The community dojo is a public resource to help anyone build and maintain healthy and strong community groups.

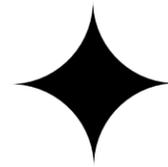
It was created for and by group leaders in the Autodesk Group Network.

It contains *knowledge* on community-building topics like starting groups and hosting events, *people* to connect with for peer advice from other group leaders, and *tools & resources* you can access as part of the network

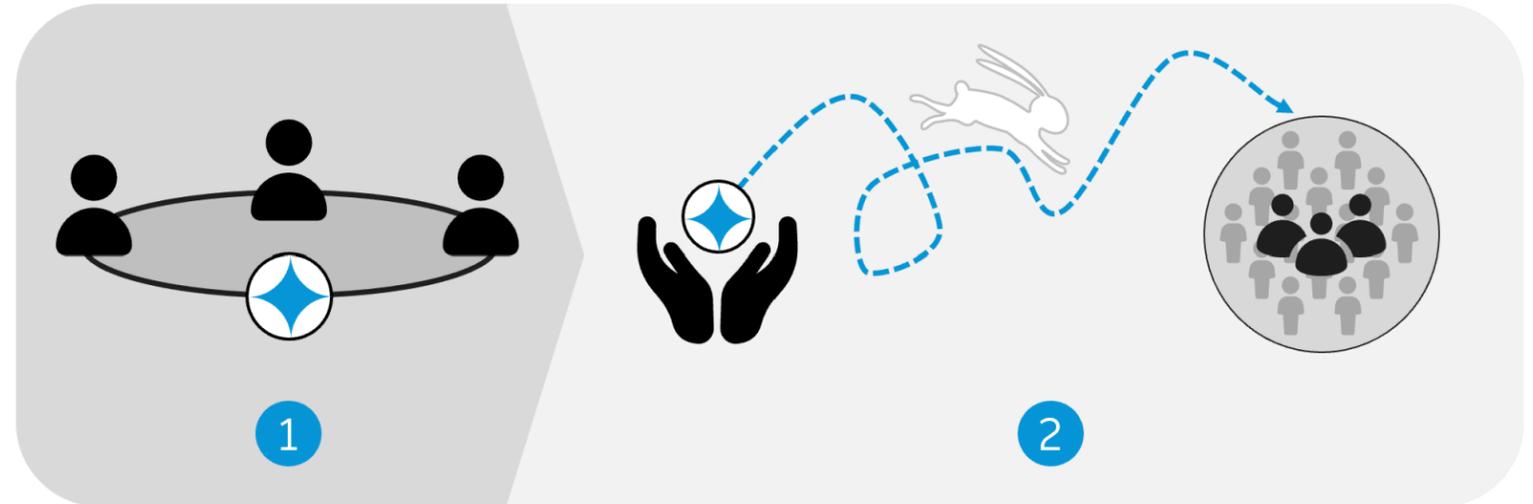
It is built to evolve through use and community contributions.

FIRST: Start with a simple spark

Nourish the spark that got you into this work in the first place. Follow where it takes you.



Most great groups start small, with healthy energy between friends and colleagues. Then groups form, grow, and stay healthy over time by nurturing and following that energy.



1 Get together with friends, around the spark of an idea or intention

The core of any great group comes from the people who are hosting, the ideas and values shared by those people, and the intention to take those ideas and values into the world - into action. Start small and see if you find good energy that feeds both you and others. What ideas and values develop? This healthy seed is critical, even if groups end up growing larger.

2 Nurture the spark, follow the energy

Good groups learn, develop, and grow from experience. Listening and following can be more important than pushing through an entangled agenda. What do people need? What do you need? What wants to happen? Follow that.

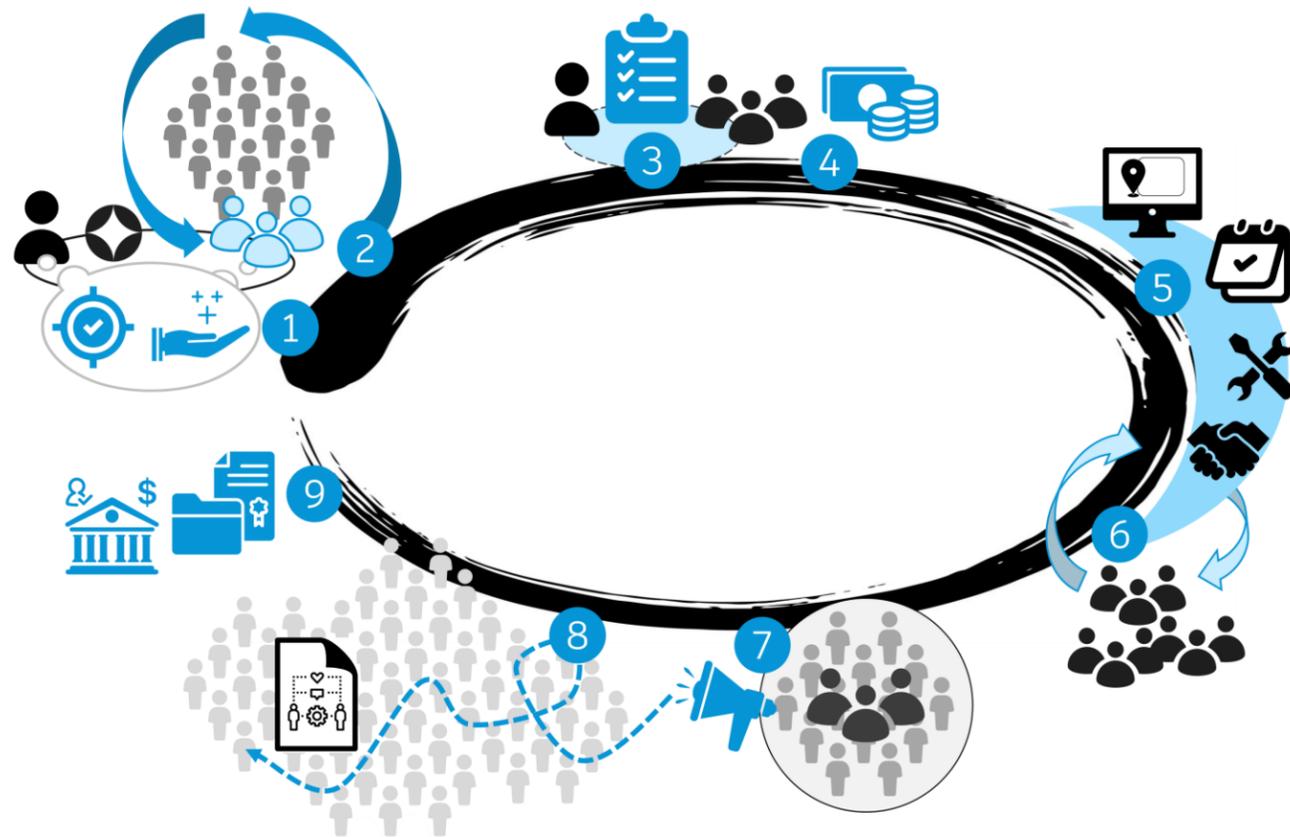
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

We wish you the best.

Starting a Community Group

Strong groups start with clear goals from leaders & by providing value to members. As you start engaging focus on listening, see where the community takes you, & see where you can take the community.

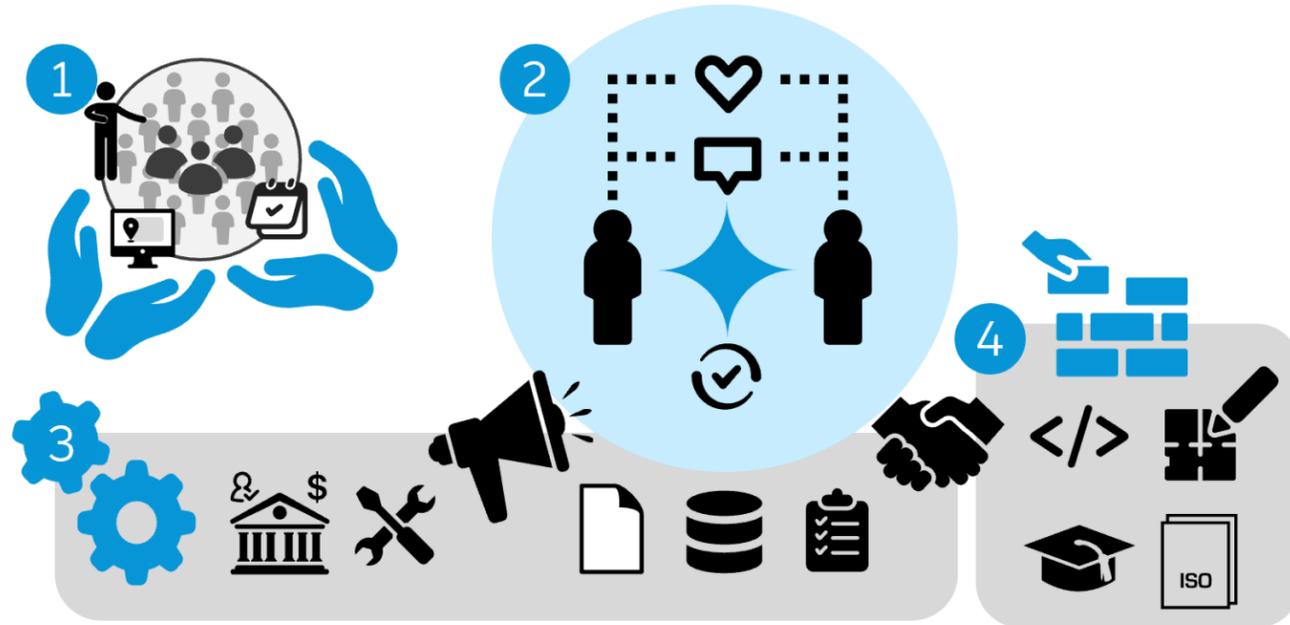


In some ways, strong groups are always being formed and renewed. As people, the world, and industries evolve this is critical for continued relevance.

- 1 Clarify your own goals & intentions**
What value will you & other members get as they participate? Is it learning, relationship building, career advancement, industry innovation, regional development?
- 2 Gauge interest with your audience & recruit co-leaders**
Test and evolve your ideas with potential collaborators and group members. If you meet others that share your goals, can you enroll them as co-leaders or add them to a list of future members?
- 3 Define your group's identity, charter, and ground rules**
What is the group's name, [mission](#), and [ground rules](#)? This is foundational so community members know what to expect and so leaders know how to work together.
- 4 Determine financial requirements of the group**
Your group may require money to host events or purchase tools. Discuss and decide how you'll fund your activities. To help get started, see the [benefits guide](#) for the Autodesk Group Network.
- 5 Make the group tangible and organize your first thing**
If your group is event-based, when's your first event, what's it about, and who will be there? If your group is online, where is it hosted and how and when can people start engaging? Consider the tools you'll use.
- 6 Prototype and learn with early members**
Try keeping the first event small, or only inviting a handful of people to the online group. This can help you build out the initial content and engagement norms, and you'll learn a lot.
- 7 Promote your group more broadly, and seek to do more**
With a strong foundation of initial engagement and enrolled leadership, you have the start of a healthy group! This is a solid place to grow from. How can you build more momentum?
- 8 Keep engaging and wayfinding with the community**
As your group keeps going, follow your energy and group momentum. Welcome new people, create space for ideas and conversations, and groom new leaders. See the [Running a Group](#) guide.
- 9 Legal structures: Incorporation & Bank Accounts**
If the group's mission requires significant infrastructure or big events, look to formalize organizational and financial structures early. Most groups don't need to do this until later, if ever.

Running a Group

The most important thing in running a group is helping people, conversations, relationships, and ideas flourish.



Start by hosting healthy spaces, meetings, and events. Focus most on encouraging engagement and relationships, and keep group administration simple and solid. With these strong foundations, perhaps your group can build partnerships and projects to have impact in your industry and community.

1 Host and hold the space

Group leaders hold space for others.

-  If your group is event-based, that cadence of [events](#) is the main container you're creating. Those events can be formal or informal.
-  If your group is [online](#) or has an online component, make sure you and other community leaders are there: engaging and encouraging others to engage.
-  Invite and welcome people. A new member's first experience is very important.
-  Keep group leader relationships strong. Your positive energy will infuse the group.

2 Catalyze engagement, nurture people & ideas, make connections

The conversations and relationships are the magic that provides the value to group members and leaders alike. Sometimes this needs a lot of energy and structure, and sometimes you just need to get out of the way and let things happen.

-  Use healthy [community management](#) tactics to spark engagement.
-  Moderating conversations is an important job. Enforce the group's [ground rules](#).

3 Manage group logistics

Group administration can be the less-fun part of running a group. Seek to simplify and minimize these logistics, but do not ignore them. See [Tips for running groups](#).

-  Marketing is hard, but if you have the right people engaged, word of mouth goes a long way.

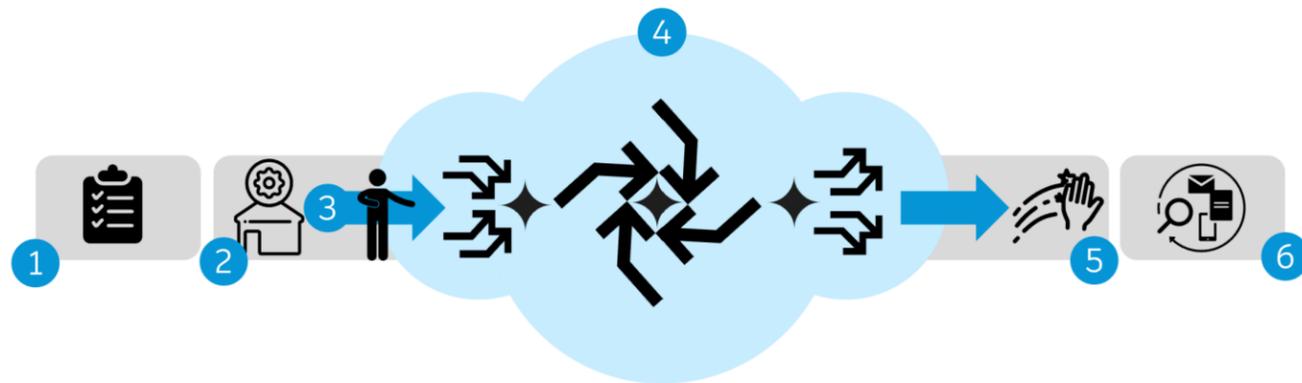
4 Do projects as a group

Mature and engaged groups, groups with very strong leaders, or groups that have an explicit mission to have an impact may try [doing group projects](#) like developing software, contributing to industry initiatives, hosting larger events & trainings, or pro-bono work.

-  [Partnerships](#) can open the door to meaningful group activity and projects.

Hosting Events

Events are powerful containers for learning, building relationships, developing ideas, & getting inspired. In-person events can be especially powerful, but online events follow the same patterns.



Hosting takes work before, during, and after the event. Communities can form and deepen through the power of great events.

Recurring meetings follow the same structure. Repeating events create a heartbeat of a community. Post-event follow-up can directly inform pre-event preparation.

Large events follow the same structure, and have nested experiences based (for each day, for example).

1 Pre-event preparation

The planning team will need to connect and plan before the event to: set a date, find a venue, arrange logistics, and plan content. See [event strategy](#) & the [pre-event planning checklist](#).

2 Event set-up

Make enough time to get the space set-up. For physical events this includes AV set-up, arranging signage and furniture, and food. For virtual events this includes queuing up media & presenters.

3 Arrival and welcome

The right kind of welcome is critical, especially for new people. This moment sets the tone. As the host, how can you help people feel comfortable by orienting them to the space and other people?

4 The event

Every event agenda has a beginning, middle, and end. See [facilitation tips](#) for each section.

-  **The beginning** is when you bring people together, set intentions and goals, and convey the agenda.
-  **The middle** is when the magic can happen. Once people are together and oriented, you help the group do what you came here to do.
-  **The end** is when you bring people together to close your time together, and also set intentions for the future.

5 Post-event clean-up and capture

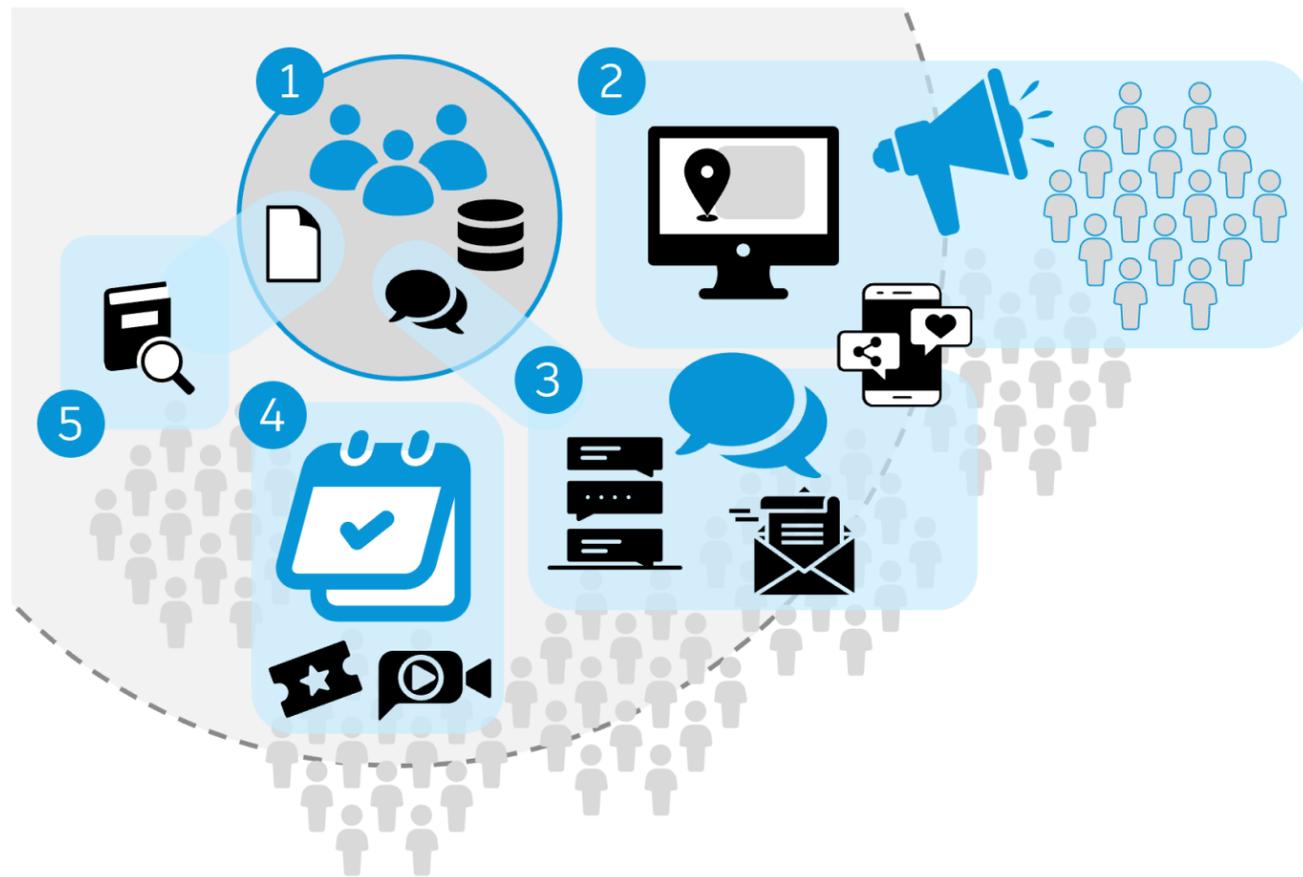
Make sure you have presentations, photos, & notes from the event. After physical events you'll need to clean up. This is a good time to debrief as leaders, & further enroll other people still there

6 Follow-up communications

Send an email or post summarizing what happened with pictures, presentation files or videos, and notes. Communicate and catalyze next steps, including future meetings. Do individual follow-ups to presenters and people you connected with.

Tools for Groups

Groups use a variety of tools to organize their activities, host conversations, connect people, and engage both members and the outside world. The choice of tools will be driven by your group's goals, membership, and interaction preferences.



There is a constellation of tools available to support group activity. The keys are to keep things simple, grow organically, and connect activity and data as much as you're able to.

Use Cases

1 Group Leader Work

Group leaders need tools to plan group activities, stay connected with each other, and manage the data associated with running groups (shared documents, files, databases, surveys).

2 Websites, Social Media and Marketing

Having a public *face* and a public *voice* of your group helps people find & understand your group.

- The front-door of your group could be a website that is a central point for information on what your group does, how to engage, and what's coming up.
- A social media account can be the group's voice: where leaders can broadcast to the world what the group is doing and you can see who else is engaging with the group.

3 Community Conversation and News

The information and value exchanged in conversation is the core value of a group. Peer-to-peer tools enable people post ideas, questions, requests for help and support, and job opportunities. Announcements and news from group leaders might be sent through email distribution lists.

4 Event Planning and Hosting

Event planning tools give you a way for people learn about the event and sign up, and might complement your group website. There are various platforms for hosting virtual meetings. For hosting physical gatherings you may want to create a portable kit of AV equipment and signage.

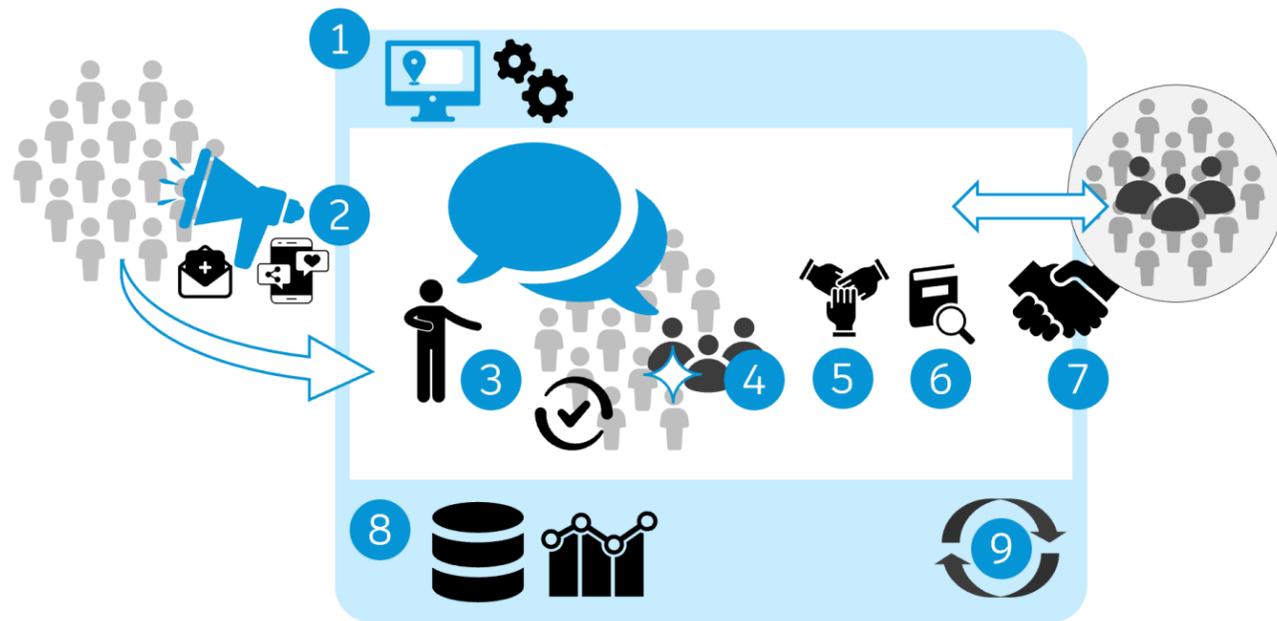
5 Knowledge, Content, and Code Management

If your group is focused on generating knowledge and content, you may end up with a library of past presentations or some other knowledge artifact you maintain as a group. If you have a developer group, you may work on or maintain code repos.

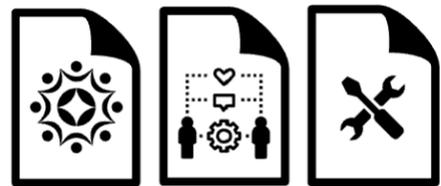
- **Ask yourself:** What tools is your audience already using? What tools do I like to use?
- See a [list of tools and links](#) for each these categories, and more [tips for community tools](#).
- [The Autodesk Group Network provides Meetup.com](#) to any group in the network that would like to use it. See the [Benefits Guide](#) for how to ask for funds to subsidize other tools you might need.

Online Groups

Online groups are a fluid & flexible way to stay connected in conversation, share information, & learn. But it's also more challenging to form the deep personal connections that are forged in-person.



Setting up the online conversation & engagement space is the easiest step. The real work of creating an online community is how you engage in that space, attract people, catalyze conversation, enable distributed leadership, and learn along the way.



See: [Starting a Group](#), [Running a Group](#), & [Tools for Groups](#)

The tips in these guides also apply to new online groups.

1 Setup the online space

Choose [a platform](#) based on your audience and goals. Configure roles, channels, and settings. Document the group description and [ground rules](#). Seed with some initial content and questions.

2 Invite members and market

Once the space up and running, start inviting others by e-mail and social media. Get early members to invite their friends and contacts. Keep those person-to-person invitations going.

3 Welcome people and moderate conversation

It's important to orient and welcome new people. A good first conversation and connection can go a long way to more engagement. Keep on-top of basic moderation tasks like removing spam.

4 Spark activity and conversation

If there's no activity for 5-7 days, do something. Ask questions yourself or send a [survey](#). Share something from your work or encourage people to share. Post news, along with your reaction.

5 Develop other community leaders and moderators

Recruit the top contributors to help moderate conversations and get more involved in the group. This will likely involve 1:1 messaging and conversations.

6 Manage knowledge and member lists

As the group engages, pin and aggregate especially helpful resources that are developed or identified. Keep membership lists tight and current, and ping people who haven't been engaging.

7 Promote other groups inside yours

Promote other groups that are useful for your audience. It gives you a good reputation in the profession. Groups grow and improve together, through a mixture of competition & cooperation.

8 Steward member data and use analytics to improve

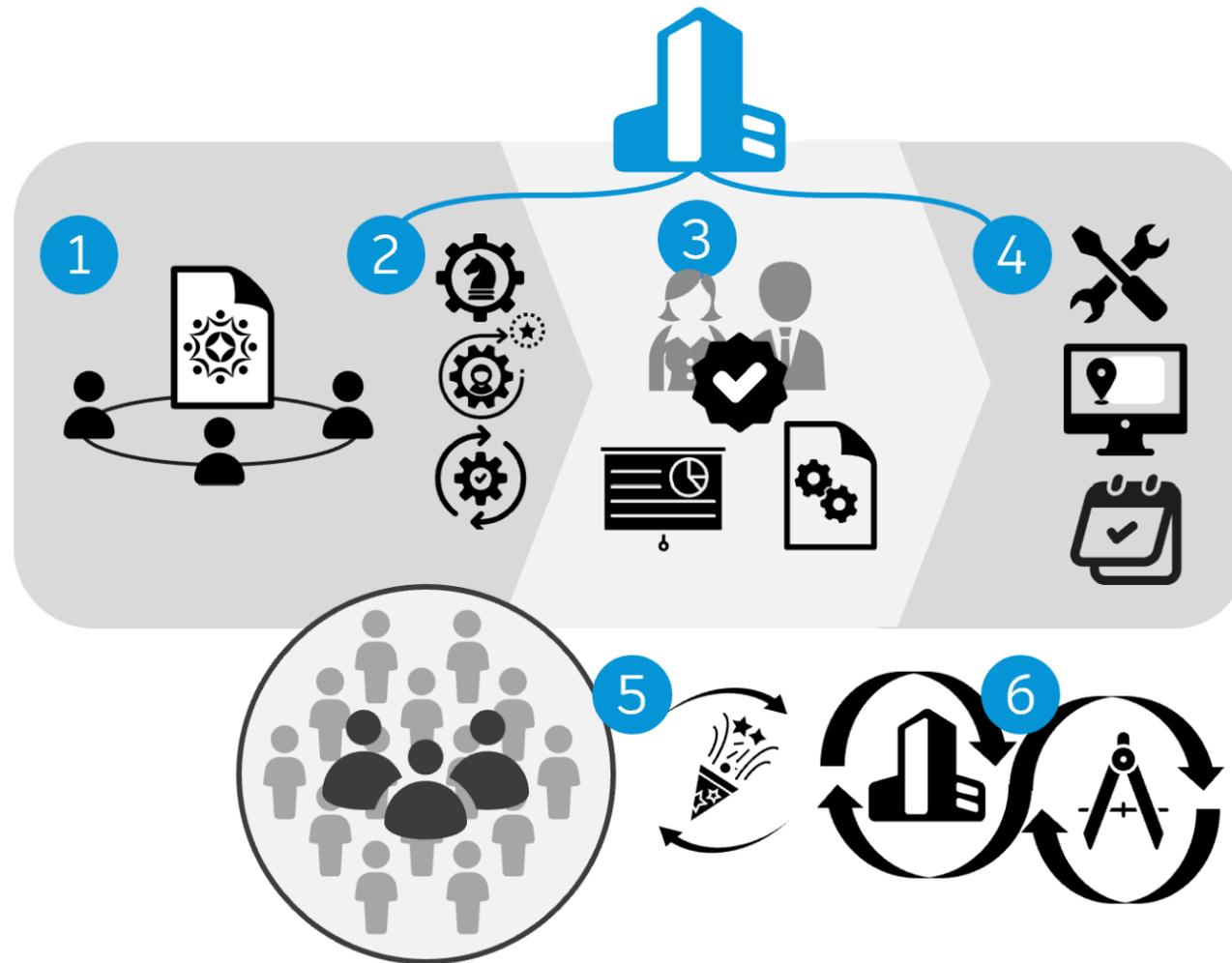
Take care of the data you collect about and from members. Study engagement trends in your group over time. What can you learn to increase the group's value? See [managing group data](#).

9 Learn and improve through feedback and engagement

As you engage, you may want to change community rules, platform settings, or the platforms and tools you're using. Stay flexible and do what's working.

Company Practice Groups

When developing internal communities of practice within your company, there are both unique challenges and opportunities to design for.



Colleagues are connected deeply in their work and practice, over time. This creates the potential to build strong relationships and do meaningful projects together as a company practice group. But for the group to be successful, it needs to fit within - and help advance - the company's culture and processes.

- 1 **Start scoping the group with a few colleagues**
Develop the idea with several colleagues from different teams and projects. How can the group help you all? How will you make space for it in your workday? See steps 1-3 in [Starting a Group](#).
- 2 **How will the group help company operations and strategy?**
Spell out how the group will contribute to initiatives like training/ mentorship, innovation, and standards/ methods/ procedures. Build a [movement of stakeholders](#) throughout the company.
- 3 **Find executive champions**
A mandate and commitment of support from leaders can help bring the group to life. [Get buy-in](#) on a business case and operational plan, then do steps 5 onward in the [Starting a Group](#) guide.
- 4 **Create a space for the group. Start talking and meeting**
Choose tools and communication methods that are appropriate to how your company already works or aspires to work. Build membership by start to [engage as a group](#).
- 5 **Make it fun, celebrate successes, appreciate others**
Can your group help spark motivation and fulfillment? Take time to [celebrate and appreciate](#) each other as you get to know each other and as you accomplish things individually and collectively.
- 6 **Spur practice-improvement, innovation, evolution, and growth**
What can your group endeavor to do that will fuel improvements to [company practice and industry innovation](#)? Pilot projects, partnerships, presenting at events?

See the Guides: [Starting a Group](#), [Running a Group](#), & [Tools for Groups](#). The tips in those guides also apply to company practice groups.