Community Management: *Understanding Roles and Responsibilities in 2020*

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

HIGHER LOGIC
ALL TOGETHER

Table of Contents

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

Overview

This eBook takes an in-depth look at the roles defined in the Community Careers and Compensation 2020 report and provides a practical guide for community professionals, hiring managers, and HR teams. In this eBook you will:

- **Understand distinctions in community management roles.** The Community Careers and Compensation 2020 research collected data for three common community roles – and the years of experience, salary, and skills required for each.

- **Meet real-life community professionals.** Six community professionals share how they found their current community role, and share advice for those interested in pursuing a career in community management.

- **Prepare job descriptions**. Use the research data to determine the qualifications necessary for different community roles and the responsibilities and main priorities of each.

- **Explore resources that advance community management skills.** Whether you're looking to build your own skills or are a manager looking to increase your team's skills, the research highlights the top resources professionals use to network and build their capabilities.

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

How to Use this eBook

This eBook is designed to help individuals use the research in the Community Careers and Compensation 2020 report and can be used in the following ways:

FOR INDIVIDUALS

❑ **Evaluate job opportunities** – Use this research to understand and assess job opportunities.

❑ **Negotiate new roles** – Use this data to help educate and frame your conversations with hiring managers. Don't assume they understand the role better than you do.

❑ **Redefine your current role** – If you are feeling overwhelmed – or underwhelmed – use this research to help redefine your role so that it is a better fit for both you and your organization.

FOR HIRING MANAGERS

❑ **Define roles** – Better align responsibilities and compensation for community roles.

❑ **Improve recruiting results** – Well-crafted job descriptions with aligned compensation will result in better candidates that are more likely to accept offers.

❑ **Create development plans** – Use this research to help define skills and responsibility targets and review community management performance.

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

About the Community Careers and Compensation 2020 Report

The Community Careers and Compensation 2020 report is a research-backed look at community management roles to give individuals and hiring managers information to:

1. **Justify investment in community management staff**

2. **Define the roles of community professionals by level of responsibility and context**

3. **Align compensation rates with responsibilities and experience**

The 2020 report is the result of survey responses from over 250 community professionals. Participants self-reported the information used to produce this report. We are mindful that individuals self-report subjectively on qualitative measures, and the skills data should be interpreted with this in mind.

This research provides general trends in the roles and compensation of community professionals. Because of the wide variation in data and the modest survey response for some categories, this data does not reflect every specific circumstance.

The salary information in this report is based on the averages of the annual salaries of full-time professionals in U.S. dollars. Participants outside of the United States self-calculated their salary based on the exchange rate in the summer of 2019.

Survey participants were recruited through The Community Roundtable's clients, members and public networks, and because of that the data is biased toward the demographics of our audience.

The findings in this eBook are based on the Community Careers and Compensation 2020 research.

Access the Report

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

FACES OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT:
KATIE BAUMER

Community and Social Media Manager, AAPS

KATIE'S TOP THREE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. Improving the UX continually

2. Building our smaller science-focused communities

3. Helping members understand the benefits of communities

Katie's Strengths:
Listening and Analyzing (Engagement)
Content Strategy Development (Content)
Evaluating Engagement Techniques (Strategic)

Why were you interested in your current role?

I'd been working in a different role at my association for 2.5 years and the opportunity to work on our online communities arose. It seemed like a great way to grow and learn new skills and stay current in association trends. This gave me an opportunity to work more directly with members and work with staff across departments in new ways.

What advice do you have for someone seeking a role like yours?

Take a look at online communities you either like using yourself, or think are doing an effective job. Ask yourself what it is they are doing well, and see what you can incorporate into your own platform. I've gotten lots of great ideas from seeing what my peers do well!

Did you know only 49% of community professionals have been promoted to another community role at their organization?

aaps

Who are Community Professionals?

The Evolution of Community Management

What is community management?

Community management is the discipline of ensuring productive communities and is becoming a strategic business skill. Because communities are one of the most effective ways to enable learning, personal growth and productivity, they play key roles in developing more fluid, collaborative and innovative organizations. Community professionals – specialists, managers, strategists and directors – are those who understand the power and dynamics of community approaches and are in the best position to help organizations transition to the future of work and deploy new generative business models.

For many years, the title 'community manager' has been the dominant role in the community field. As the discipline has grown, one role has become insufficient to address all the needs of community teams – both because the responsibilities (and the experience they require) are expanding and because there are disciplines within the field – like analytics, content or governance – that can be roles in their own right.

The Community Careers and Compensation 2020 research and this eBook profile three community management roles:

1. **Community Manager**
2. **Community Strategist**
3. **Director of Community**

Not every community program will staff all three roles, and community roles are not limited to just these three profiles. These roles don't suggest a linear career progression. Rather, these profiles detail the most common roles and the responsibilities and strengths of each role to aid in better resource planning, compensation, and career advancement.

Community Professionals
At A Glance

The average community professional has over a decade and a half of work experience, with six years of community experience. While the average community professional holds a mid-level role, community professionals range from junior positions to executive roles. This is important to note, as organizations learn how to staff a variety of community roles - and more individuals have the experience to be part of a community team than those that can manage the responsibility of being a solo community manager. As community programs mature, we expect to see even more role variation.

For those looking to hire community staff, they come from a wide variety of backgrounds, with the dominant fields being marketing, communications, customer support, IT, and L&D.

Education

- 57% Bachelor's Degree
- 30% Master's Degree
- 10% High School GED / Associate's Degree
- 3% Other

Functional Background of Community Professionals

Field	External	Internal
Internal Communications		15%
Marketing	24%	10%
Other	15%	10%
Customer Support	13%	
External Communications / PR	8%	5%
Information Technology	6%	14%
Learning & Development	6%	11%

■ External ■ Internal

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

Community
Skills
Framework™

Community Skills Framework™ Overview

Introduction to the Community Management Skills Framework^{TM}

The Community Skills Framework categorizes the skills and responsibilities of community professionals.

This research classifies community management skills in four skill families essential to the profession:

Engagement and people skills: These skills enable relationship development, understanding motivations and the design of social environments that reward individuals.

Content development skills: These skills enable the creation of multi-modal content and programming designed to build engagement and drive value from multiple segments.

Strategic and business skills: These skills include the program management, governance, advocacy and training required for organizations to understand this new approach.

Technical skills: These skills include an understanding of the need for and implications of platform architecture, integration and analytics.

The 2020 research explores the different responsibilities in each of these skill categories and if/how the way community professionals prioritize these skills changes depending on their experience level and job profiles.

Overall, engagement and people skills rank highest across all job profiles. Content development skills are more important for less senior roles, and developing strategic and business skills is critical for community professionals looking to advance in their career. Technical skills are most relevant to community strategist roles.

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

Community Skills Framework™
How to Use the Framework

Use the Community Skills Framework^{TM} in the following ways:

- Assess an individual's strengths and weaknesses
- Assess a team's skills and responsibilities
- Develop professional development objectives
- Define standard job definitions
- Define new community management roles

Click to read more about the Community Skills Framework^{TM}

Community Skills Framework™

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

Community Skills Framework™
50 Essential Community Skills

—ENGAGEMENT SKILLS—

- ☐ Listening & Analyzing
- ☐ Response & Escalation
- ☐ Moderation & Conflict Facilitation
- ☐ Promoting Productive Behaviors
- ☐ Empathy & Member Support
- ☐ Facilitating Connections
- ☐ New Member Recruitment
- ☐ New Member Welcoming
- ☐ Member Advocacy
- ☐ Behavior Change & Gamification

—CONTENT SKILLS—

- ☐ Communication Planning
- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Graphics & Design
- ☐ Multimedia Production
- ☐ Narrative Development
- ☐ Editing
- ☐ Curation
- ☐ Program & Event Planning
- ☐ Taxonomy & Tagging Management
- ☐ SEO & Search Optimization

—BUSINESS SKILLS—

- ☐ Program Management
- ☐ Business Model Development
- ☐ Budget & Financial Management
- ☐ Team Hiring & Management
- ☐ Contractor Hiring & Management
- ☐ Selling, Influencing & Evangelizing
- ☐ Community Advocacy & Promotion
- ☐ Training Development & Delivery
- ☐ Vendor Management
- ☐ Governance Management

—STRATEGIC SKILLS—

- ☐ Community Strategy Development
- ☐ Roadmap Development
- ☐ Policy & Guideline Development
- ☐ Needs & Competitive Analysis
- ☐ Measurement, Benchmarking, & Reporting
- ☐ Trendspotting & Synthesizing
- ☐ Consulting
- ☐ Executive Coaching
- ☐ Content Strategy Development
- ☐ Evaluating Engagement Techniques

—TECHNICAL SKILLS—

- ☐ Systems Administration
- ☐ Data Collection & Analysis
- ☐ Tool Evaluation & Recommendation
- ☐ Technical Support
- ☐ Member Database Management
- ☐ Platform Architecture & Integration
- ☐ Technology Issue Resolution
- ☐ Software & Application Programming
- ☐ UX & Design
- ☐ Algorithm Design & Data Manipulation

__Click to read more about the Community Skills Framework™__

14

FACES OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT:
MELISSA SWARTZ, CAE

Sr. Manager, Volunteer Engagement, ISACA

MELISSA'S TOP THREE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. **Learn:** Enable members to share preferred practices and resources to build their confidence and skillset.

2. **Network:** Facilitate connections and allow the exchange of ideas in a productive and positive environment.

3. **Participate:** Encourage individuals to get involved in our online discussions and volunteer program.

Melissa's Strengths:
Facilitating Connections (Engagement)
Program Management (Business)
Community Advocacy & Promotion (Business)

Why were you interested in your current role?

I joined ISACA 3.5 years ago to manage the volunteer engagement program and have since added community management to my portfolio. As staffing roles changed within the organization over time, I assumed responsibility for the launch of the new Higher Logic platform and then its ongoing success. I was eager to take on this new program because my role is all about relationship building, and I see all of the products we contracted from Higher Logic (discussions & libraries, event manager, microsites, volunteer manager) as tools to facilitate interactions among our members.

Our members join to advance in their careers, to get to know other people in similar roles, or to stay up to date on the latest industry trends. It is rewarding to see comments in our certification exam prep communities thanking other participants for the support as they enthusiastically share that they just passed their certification exam. We are making a difference, even if it is often behind the scenes.

What advice do you have for someone seeking a role like yours?

Communities are all about people, and people will always surprise you! Generally, even in the most heated discussions, the intent of the content comes from a good place. Sometimes people just need coaching on how to properly communicate their thoughts productively and positively. Be supportive. Just as you would with your employees, praise publicly and coach privately.

I love questions - often it is eye opening to me to see their rationale for using a tool or a widget in a way that I never would have considered.

15

Profiles of Community Roles

Community Roles
in 2020

As more organizations adopt community approaches and as community teams grow in size, we see salaries rising compared with data in previous years, particularly for specialist and manager roles. And, unlike a common misperception, most community roles are not entry-level according to our sample. The average community professional had from five to eight years of community experience and over 14 years of aggregate work experience.

Unlike in past years, compensation, years of experience, bonus structures, and promotion history is starting to rationalize with the average and mean falling closer together suggesting less variance in the range. However, we still saw a significant difference between the lowest and highest total compensation in each category, especially in the specialist and manager categories.

	COMMUNITY SPECIALIST	COMMUNITY MANAGER		COMMUNITY STRATEGIST		DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY	
		Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal	External
Years of Work Experience	14.7	14.9	15.8	22.9	16.2	18.2	18.9
Years of Community Experience	5.3	6.5	5.1	8.3	6.8	6.0	6.7

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

NOELLE PICKLER

Manager of Communities and Training,
Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing

Noelle's Strengths:
Empathy and Member Support (Engagement)
Program Management (Business)
Listening and Analyzing (Engagement)

NOELLE'S TOP THREE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. Creating a safe, welcoming, and informational environment people enjoy visiting

2. Reporting on ROI to the BOD and CEO

3. My title is "Manager of Communities and Training." I'd like to find ways to transition the training aspect out of my role and focus solely on community.

Why were you interested in your current role?

My background is in marketing and social media. I worked at a small, family owned business in the luxury service industry for several years before holding this role, and honed excellent customer service skills. I think my experience prior to this one was "the perfect storm," of not just producing marketing content, but also connecting with our customer base to create a welcoming environment. That ability to connect with others and make them feel welcome, coupled with my skills in content creation, made community management sound like something I would really enjoy and succeed at.

What advice do you have for someone seeking a role like yours?

Be prepared for tons of interaction with your constituent base.

Unlike marketing and social media which can be largely one sided, community management revolves around interaction and communication. You might even become "recognizable" because of your activity, and people will reach out to you for things outside of your scope of work. Stay patient and helpful while guiding them to the correct people. There's nothing about this job that is "set it and forget it," and I would encourage anyone in community management to pay close attention to the activity taking place, and don't be afraid to make adjustments or reach out to someone along the way if you have a cool idea.

I think a friendly, outgoing personality is a big advantage to this role.

Sigma
GLOBAL NURSING EXCELLENCE

Community Specialist

Community Specialist
Role

OVERVIEW

Community Specialists are the experts and emerging experts on a community team. Unlike community manager roles, where generalists are prized, Community Specialists often have a focus in one of three disciplines: engagement, content, or technical initiatives.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Community Specialists focus on tactical initiatives and projects to support the community team in their area of expertise. On the job, Community Specialists tend to be "in the weeds" doing anything from providing training and support to members, curating and editing community content, or working with analytics, design, content management systems or other technical assets. For those interested in a community career who lack the general skill set required, joining a team as a Community Specialist is a great way to start with a specific focus, letting you expand your roles and responsibilities from there if interested.

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

Community Specialist
Job Description

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

ENGAGEMENT & PEOPLE

- ❑ Ongoing monitoring of activity and listening
- ❑ Ongoing moderation, response, and escalation of community activity
- ❑ Manage member database and recommend programming
- ❑ Facilitate connections among members

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

- ❑ Develop and manage member outreach
- ❑ Create and curate content
- ❑ Curate, manage, and share content of interest to members
- ❑ Edit team content

TECHNICAL

- ❑ Manage and administer community platforms and tools
- ❑ Provide technical community support to team and members
- ❑ Research and identify technical solutions for community improvements

Variables

Use case: Different use cases require different experiences and familiarity

Audience profile: Familiarity and comfort with the target audience will increase trust

Community size: Larger communities require more staff and automation than smaller communities, which allow for deeper relationships

Community maturity: Community management in new communities requires more strategic skills than in older communities where activities are more routine

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

FACES OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT:
TONI SHOOLA

Associate, Pretrial Justice Institute

TONI'S TOP THREE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. Engagement

2. Information Sharing

3. Collaboration

Toni's Strengths:
Program Management (Business)
Measuring, Benchmarking, & Reporting (Strategic)
Graphics & Design (Content)

Why were you interested in your current role?

Collaboration is what makes things happen. I was drawn to this role for the ability to facilitate collaboration, encourage growth and engagement and to make a difference.

What advice do you have for someone seeking a role like yours?

Be patient, it takes time to grow and engage community. Be willing to experiment, try something if it works, great! If not, tweak it, or try something new.

Communities aren't a "build it and they will come" venture.

Set realistic goals, and recognize that when starting programs, just as when starting communities, it can be beneficial to have smaller events and initiatives that allow you to set expectations and provide better value for those who participate.

pji
PRETRIAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE

Community
Manager

Community Manager
Role

OVERVIEW OF ROLE

Community managers often oversee more processes than people and are the generalists of the community field. Although some community managers manage moderators or specialists, many work with other teams as the voice of the community. A community manager can be an entry-level role in some companies but on average they are mid-level professionals with over a decade in the workforce and over six years in community.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Community managers are the face and voice of the community. To make the community successful, they work with members to help them find value while ensuring organizational sponsors also receive value. Community managers balance tactical engagement and programming activities with more strategic responsibilities like planning and reporting. In small organizations, they are likely responsible for everything related to the community, while at larger organizations they may have direct reports, work on a larger team, or have the support of outsourced resources.

Community Manager
Job Description

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

ENGAGEMENT & PEOPLE

❑ Develop and execute member engagement processes

❑ Ongoing monitoring of activity and listening

❑ Promote and reward valuable behaviors

❑ Facilitate connections among members

❑ Manage advocacy/champion programs

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

❑ Develop and manage an editorial calendar

❑ Create content (blog posts, videos, newsletters, etc)

❑ Curate, manage, and share content

❑ Plan and facilitate community programming and events

STRATEGIC & BUSINESS

❑ Measure and report community performance

❑ Advocate for the community and coordinate internally

❑ Manage staff or outsourced resources

TECHNICAL

❑ Manage and administer community platforms and tools

❑ Research and recommend community tools

VARIABLES

Use case: Different use cases require different experiences and familiarity

Audience profile: Familiarity and comfort with the target audience will increase trust

Community size: Larger communities require more staff and automation than smaller communities, which allow for deeper relationships

Community maturity: Community management in new communities requires more strategic skills than in older communities where activities are more routine

CATHERINE HACKNEY

Community Manager,
Confident Communities Consulting

CATHERINE'S TOP THREE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. Bring value to members of the community.

2. Create a safe space where members can connect that is different and has an added level of privacy than social media with the use of rules of engagement and moderation.

3. Increase trust customers have in the organization hosting the community.

Confident Communities CONSULTING

Catherine's Strengths:
Empathy and Member Support (Engagement)
Training Development & Delivery (Business)
Tool Evaluation & Recommendation (Technical)

Why were you interested in your current role?
I am actually self-employed. I requested an official "community manager" role at the association I previously worked at but it was not an option at that time. I also happened to have another association come my way who needed part time community help, so I decided to create an LLC and leave the association I was working for. Since then I have been working at home full time for several organizations doing online community consulting and management. I knew I wanted to be a full time community manager shortly after I was given the role of community admin at an association over 5 years ago.

As soon as I saw the value members were getting from being able to openly discuss career challenges and day to day issues in a safe, private environment, I knew this was a powerful tool.

What advice do you have for someone seeking a role like yours?

Join as many online communities as you can! Especially those in the industry you are interested in focusing on and for other community managers. Don't be shy - post, ask questions, respond to others, flex your own online community member muscles so that you can always keep the member perspective and experience top of mind. This will also get your name out there so you can start to build a network relevant to your interests and goals.

Practice asking for help from your network - there is a wealth of knowledge out there, use it to your advantage. As long as you are willing to help others in return, you will have no trouble receiving the help you need.

Director of Community

Director of Community
Role

OVERVIEW OF ROLE

Directors of Community lead community programs and typically lead teams that include community specialists, managers, and strategists. They often have operational backgrounds and are paired with community experts with their focus on securing internal support, integrating across the organization, managing a team, and communicating strategic progress.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors of Community focus on the health of a community program. They are responsible for operations – planning and delivering on the community roadmap. Their priorities tend to be governance, internal advocacy, training, and measurement.

A large part of the Director of Community role is as an internal champion - ensuring that executives and other stakeholders understand the value of the community, are getting the information they need, and that the community is aligned with their priorities. While directors still participate occasionally in tactical responsibilities and a community background is valuable, their main focus is on operational strategy.

Director of Community
Job Description

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

ENGAGEMENT & PEOPLE

- ❑ Respond to escalations, from the community or the organization
- ❑ Engage champions and stakeholders

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

- ❑ Analyze need and set direction for programs, events, and other activities

STRATEGIC

- ❑ Develop and update the community strategy
- ❑ Build the community roadmap

BUSINESS

- ❑ Hire, mentor, manage, and develop staff
- ❑ Communicate priorities for community programs and other communication
- ❑ Secure budget and resources
- ❑ Ensure executive sponsorship and champion the community internally
- ❑ Engage and manage consultants and contractors
- ❑ Act as liaison between internal and external stakeholders

TECHNICAL

- ❑ Oversee community tool portfolio to ensure effectiveness
- ❑ Develop and present community data to various stakeholders

VARIABLES

Size of community: Larger communities require bigger teams making management, mentoring, and leadership traits more important

Size of organization: Large organizations require experience working in complex environments – and the patience to go slowly

Organizational context: Familiarity with the organization's business model and culture can enhance the trust of stakeholders considerably

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

FACES OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT:
SIMON HELTON

Director of Membership and Community,
International Society for Technology in Education

SIMON'S TOP THREE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2. Measuring value and demonstrating the ROI of the community.

3. Determining engagement strategy/goals.

Simon's Strengths:
Empathy and Member Support (Engagement)
Facilitating Connections (Engagement)
Measurement, Benchmarking, and Reporting (Strategic)

Why were you interested in your current role?

I've always been a community nerd. When I was 16 and got my first car, I joined a car forum for maintenance information. Traveling in college? Join a backpacking forum. Get into competitive gaming? Join a gaming forum. The list goes on. So when I was working as a teacher but saw ISTE was hiring a community manager for their educator communities, this seemed like such a natural fit.

I got to do for a living what I had been passionate about as a participant for years and with people who shared a profession with me. I know community teams are perpetually understaffed (and usually a team of one), but I also enjoy that you get to do a bit of everything. You need some technical skills and some soft skills to succeed. If you're all one or the other, it's going to be a struggle. I also like getting to really know our members and what they like, what they struggle with, and what they need from us. It isn't always easy to be their advocate on staff, but it's necessary.

What advice do you have for someone seeking a role like yours?

As I mentioned above, it's a huge benefit for a community manager to have technical skills and soft skills. Community managers need to be able to mediate a disagreement, connect people...and analyze a boatload of data to understand how their community is performing. If you know CSS or can help with technical maintenance of your community, that's even better. There's no one right path to being in community, but the people who are best at it are well-rounded.

ISTE

About The Community Roundtable

About The Community Roundtable

The Community Roundtable is the most trusted voice in community management.

Using the industry's only comprehensive research - the State of Community Management - as a framework, we help global community leaders define, launch, manage, and measure effective community programs.

How do we help community leaders build award winning community programs?

"The perspective I've gained has been invaluable in making the case for community-related budget and resources. It has also helped me build a vocabulary to communicate about communities."

Microsoft

Alex Blanton
Senior Community
Program Manager

"TheCR Network offers so many support opportunities, it has been very helpful to connect with other people who are living this role."

ez cater

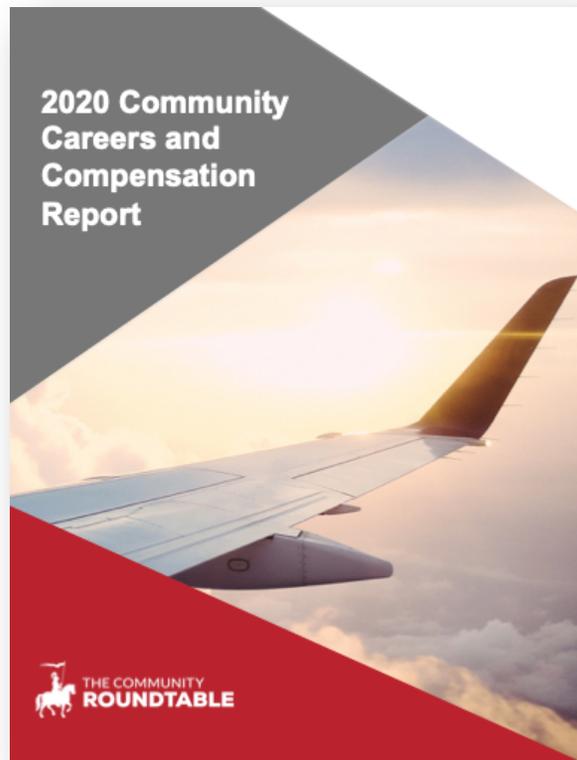Genevieve Babineau
Caterer Growth &
Success Manager

"The CR is a one-stop shop for learning everything there is to know about communities, connecting to other communities professionals and building community skills."

HILTI

Erik S. Meyers
Head of Corporate
Communications

Read more testimonials at: the.cr/customersuccess

More From The Community Roundtable

2020 Community Careers and Compensation Report

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

The Value of Community: *Behavior Change to ROI*

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Sponsored by: HIGHER LOGIC ALL TOGETHER

THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Find even more at: www.communityroundtable.com

THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

FOR COMMUNITY PROFESSIONALS

META? YES.
INVALUABLE? ALSO, YES.

For over a decade global community leaders have trusted TheCR Network for the tools, research, resources, and people they need to succeed. We know there are no one-size-fits-all community solutions, so we help solve your community challenges in the most convenient and effective ways for you.