



## Using the Internet to Support Member Education and Build Participatory Democracy

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## Presentation Goal

Participants will . . .

- See what online member communities can do
- Be able to list 3 ways an online community might support their education and training programs and
- Let me know if they are interested talking more about this.



## Outline

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CDI's Development Process

What People do in an Online Community

Ways Online Communities can Support  
Member Education Programs and Build  
Participatory Democracy

Next Steps – How might an online community  
benefit your education and training  
programs?



## CDI's Development Process

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- Hired consultants to add discussion forums to our website on various issues
- Partnered with Communispace, a software and site hosting company in Boston
- Found two volunteers to develop open source resources to reduce costs for small communities
- Developed online community facilitation and training skills
- Used online community resources to support some board and member training programs and cooperative development efforts

## A new approach



Since 2000 Communispace has helped Hallmark (and numerous other companies):

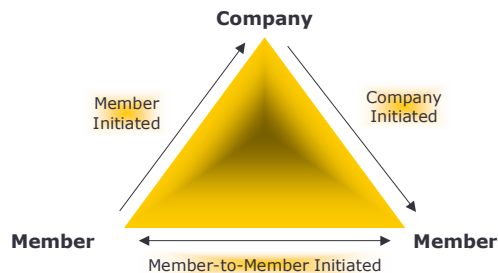
1. Engage customers in ongoing conversations
2. Gain unparalleled insight into their lives
3. Increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and affinity

Cooperative Life 2003 Annual Conference  
14-November 2003

communispace

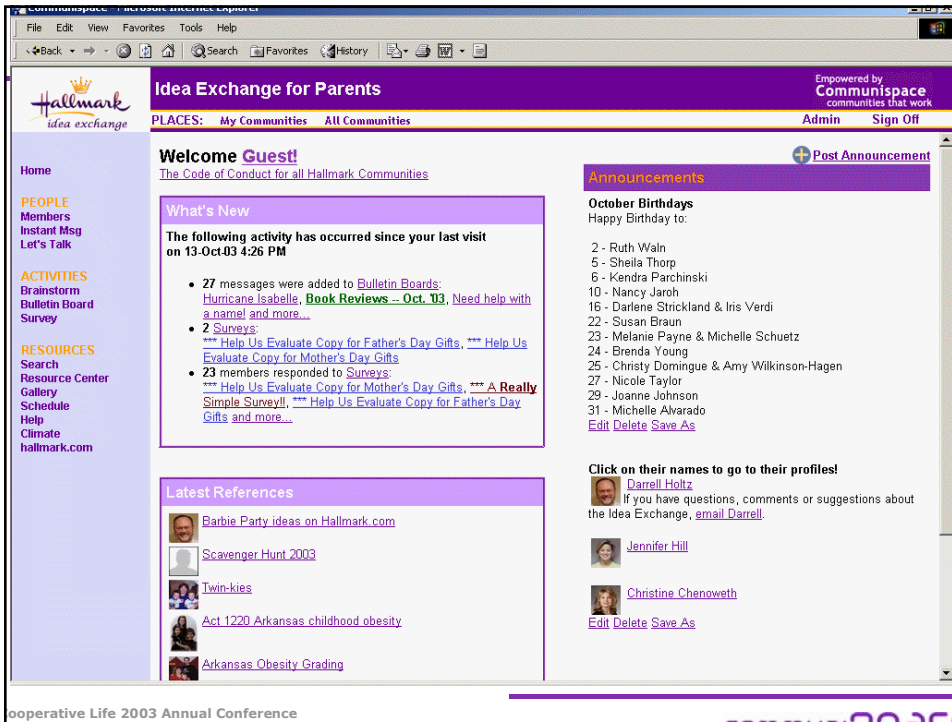
## What is a Customer Community?

- Private and secure online environment
- Membership by screening and invitation only
- Generally target ~300 members per community
- Designed along 7 success factors
- Enables three-way conversations



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## What do members think?

- I really like the idea of a company valuing my opinion and having a say in how policies are being made, formed or changed.
- Right after I agreed to be a participant, <major airline> asked me to join their "group." However, all I ever received from them in the same period of time were 2 surveys. No community. You are definitely doing a better job, and it has improved my opinion of the company.



## What do people do in an Online Community?

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- **Create ideas** about how to build the organization
- Form **relationships** with one another and the organization
- **Vote** on new ideas, programs, or organizational changes
- Discuss **market trends, lifestyle and cultural issues**
- **Respond** to marketing campaigns, special offers or nomenclature
- Talk about **competitive products** or organizations
- Provide **feedback** to the Board
- **Share** resources



## What do people do in an Online Community? (cont.)

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- Give **unsolicited advice** about the co-op's value, fees, and quality
- **Brainstorm** new ideas
- **Learn** about new products, programs and resources
- **Surface emerging needs** or desires
- **Recruit** volunteers and **organize** activities
- **Build leadership**
- Deliver **immediate and ongoing** insights
- Help **guide** the organization's future and reduce market research costs



## Obstacles

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- **Access** to technology
- Board and management **concerns**
- **Integration** with other decision making processes
- Member's **misunderstanding** of their role
- Finding the **time**
- **Cost** of facilitation and training staffing
- Finding compelling **reasons** for members to sign on



## How can an Online Community support Education and Training Programs?

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Online Communities give boards, management and members a vehicle to:

- Identify **training needs**
- Increase participation in training event **planning** and **evaluation**
- **Prepare** participants for a training
- **Deliver** training content
- **Review and apply** new learning from a recent training
- Document training **outcomes**



## How can an Online Community support Participatory Democracy?

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Online Communities give boards, management and members a vehicle to:

- Identify **member needs**
- **Educate members** about their role in the cooperative
- **Enhance communication** between management, board and members
- Build **shared vision** and **consensus** on key decisions



## Review Sample Discussion

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- What do you notice about this discussion?
- What value was added?
- What concerns/questions do you have?
- How might you use discussions like this to support your education and training programs?



Let me know if you are interested in talking more about how to use online communities to support board and member education and strengthen participatory democracy.

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