The Industry Leaders Member Research - Best Community-Building Tools

Name	What it Does	Why it's Good	Anything bad?	Free Version?	Cost	Other Notes
Mighty Networks	Allows you to create an online community on your own website. Used by creators/entrepenuers, bringing together their community, courses and sales pages under their brand. Features include the ability to write articles (with images and videos), ask questions and put up polls, and direct messaging enabled. it enables you to charge people for your membership.	Everything in one place.' Really user friendly platform, has some highly rated educational programs and their event/calendar feature is apparently very good. Actively solicits user feedback to constantly improve, aesthetic/well designed platform, brings small business owners together etc	Payment system is not user-friendly and limits the businesses that can pay using it (Stripe), the wide range of options when signing up makes start-up process complicated, they don't have a live video feature, lack of customer/user management features, file sharing rather than embedded audio.	Yes	Community Version for 23 dollars a month, buisness version for 81 dollars a month, and also a Pro version but you have to contact Mighty Networks for more details on that.	https://www.getapp.co.uk/reviews/132779/mighty-networks for customer reviews on Mighty Networks
Tribe	Entirely focused on community building features, a platform with already many established top brands - it enables you to create a fully customisable experience, from logo to widgets and colours/domain. you can write articles, post images and videos and ask quetions. Content can be categorised as well.	Highly customisable to reflect your branding, works really well on both web and mobile browser, highly secure so allows you to build community with 100% GDPR compliance, members can join easily through the Social login that supports FB, Slack, LinkedIn, etc It also has native gamification tools and it has a library of apps and integrations which can be used to extent the functionality of your community.	It doesn't have a mobile app function, or inbuilt monetization tools	Yes	Plus plan priced at $85/month or the Premium Plan priced at $249/month	
Spectrum.chat	allows you to launch a free and public community with a real-time chat-like conversation, but where conversations can be discovered by search engines and also indexed, giving you threaded discussions and real-time chat, all in one place	unlimited chat, unlimited members, there is a brandable sign up page, secure, private channels, a single dm inbox and email member invitiations	communities on spectrum are not fully customizable based on your branding - you cannot host the community under your custom domain. also, lack of SSO, moderation tools, integrations, reporting and analytics.	Yes	Entirely free	
Slack	The easiest platform to build a community of professionals, slack is a popular buisness messaging and collaboration tool, although many use it to build communities for professionals	It has a good free plan, top-notch usability and wide distribution of the Slack app. Has a member directory, file broswer, video calling function, real-time communication and the ability to create channels for discussions and categorizing of them using Sections. it is highly recommended for real-time discussion.	Easy to hit the limits of the free plan, which only includes 10k messages that are searchable. also can't build public communities using Slack which blocks people from discovering your community via search engines. no customization capability, no moderation or analytics features. not suitable for asynchronous communications required for discussion forums.	Yes	Standard ($6.67 per member): Unlimited messages archive, unlimited apps, and group video calling. Plus ($12.50 per member): SAML-based SSO, data export, 99.99% uptime SLA Enterprise Grid: This is a custom plan for enterprise companies. Comes with unlimited workspaces, advanced security features, and compliance systems.	
Facebook groups	used to create dedicated groups for people with common passions so they can discuss various topics related to their area of interest.	It is the best app for growing your audience organically, great member engagement, integrated FB live functionality, native FB mobile apps, completely free to use, is considered the most popular option with over 2.6 billion monthly active users (gain access to large audience making it easier to drive engagement). Lots of useful community features, can create engaging posts with text, images, polls and scheduled events etc	Lack of ownership or control over notifications since FB algorithm decides (you don't own the community or audience). privacy and distraction concerns as the FB user recieved a lot of messages, notifcations from friends, advertisment and polarized debates that turn it into a distraction machine. no way to charge for access either.	Yes	Entirely free	
Circle	Circle is a branded community platform that is focused solely on the community-building side of things.	it has a clean, modern design and powerful community features. Has the ability to embed widgets on external sites, includes a native iOS app for users and supports SSO integrations. the platform takes care of all the important aspects of community design and engagement, you can also create private spaces inside the community and make sure only specific people have access to the discussions in that space, simple and intuitive user interface. also has direct integration with wordpress as well as with popular membership platforms like Memberful and memberSpace	No android app available and no inbuilt monetization tools	No, not available	Basic plan for 39 dollars a month or professional plan for 79/month or enterprise plan for 199 dolllars a month	
BuddyBoss*	The best WordPress-based community builder, this one is quite different to the others as its a worldpress based community software rather than a hosted platform	covers all the essential requirements of an online community software, including creation of posts, social groups and member directory, private/group messaging and notifcations, personalised activity feeds for members, etc. also can create events inside your community or sub-groups and you can host live events through the native zoom integrations. it also offers advanced features such as gamifying your community through GamiPress, intrates the popular wordpress LMS plugin, and Learndash to enable you to create and share an online course with your community. best thing about it is the extendability of functionality	requires you to be somewhat tech-savvy as it isnt the easiest to set up, can also get pretty expensive	no, not available	$228/year for a 1-site license. 5-site license for $288/year and a 10-site license for $328/year. these plans don't include the app functionality which is a different service from 219 dollars a month.	
Disciple	Very good for builing premium online communities, this is a popular platform that allow you to create a fully branded community over which you have complete ownership and control.	feature rich community builder, native live streaming funcitonality, branded iOS and android apps, inbuilt monetization tools	super expensive to have, also charges a transaction fee	no, not available	Web plan for 55 dollars a month and mobile plan that is 389 dollars a month	
Hivebrite	Specialized community management software, built form the ground up to help organisations manage their alumni networks, volunteer protals or other professional networks	powerful community management tools, hob board functionality, inbuilt monetization tools, branded mobile apps	suitable only for professional networks, and has an expensive pricing plan	no, not available	Starts from around 500 dollars a month	
Crowdstack	Crowdstack is essentially an extension of your original website and works as a social community for your audience to help you grow. It allows you to set your own engagement rule and keep your content to yourself, along with offering you a cohesive experience for easy management and customization. Moreover, with User Generated Marketing (UGM), effortlessly increase your user base in the most cost-effective way possible, and use your existing customer base to enhance your SEO.	efficient member management and audience engagment, subgroups, automation to help build customizable workflows, review content, send emails and congratualte members, complicane with international security standards for data privacy, premium allows monetization of your community to generate revenue	inflexible, rigid plans, no ability to cross post across subgroups and main page, The backend of the site could be a lot more intuitive. There are lots of workarounds that you need to do in order to implement certain actions. User documentation could be better, especially in the area of registration and enrollment and theme creation.	yes	Fullstack version for 59 dollars a month + Crowdstack Pro offers other, more expensive features	
Glue Up	Software for growing your community and pacing up networking - offers events, community and membership managment suite to keep your audience engaged.	The built-in CRM helps you with customer engagement and contact management, so you can generate more revenue. Plan and organize events, both online and offline, including workshops and webinars with an automated events platform. Email campaigns and marketing to promote/advertise your community or welcome new members are easily customizable, with metrics analysis to monitor campaigns. Collaborate across teams and automate manual tasks so you can be more focused on the more important things at hand. Communicate with your community and keep them in the loop 365 days a year, to engage and spark discussions and help businesses.	"Its drag and drop functionality is also its weakness as it limits users' ability to design the emailers and website they way they need it to be." "I still need to completely familiarize myself with all the features, however, the biggest challenge I have running an NGO is the fact that our funds are quite limited." "Editing your event and Newsletter are limited with built in function." "The low send volumes for email newsletters, coupled with the high cost and poor email builder (white-labeled SendGrid) are extremely annoying."	no, not available	There are multiple different plans, starting at 125 dollars a month, and include event management suite plan, membership management suite plan, community management suite plan, webinar management suite plan and training management suite plan, all of which you can get quotes for on the official website by inputting your email and recieving a quote	
Forumbee	community forum built for engaging customers and scaling your product support in a highly customisable way	Create an easy to participate discussion forum and allow file sharing, highlight contributions, and create member profiles for better community building. Peer-to-peer Q&A sessions by category and tags help you engage your audience and also find effective answers at the same time. You can also create a knowledge base to create content to help customers find quick answers, and also organize your content with team contribution. Find creative product ideas from your customers and keep them in the loop to discover popular feedback, keeping them engaged. Forumbee offers an intuitive interface that is efficient and manageable, with powerful tools to keep the audience engaged and automated welcome messages.	"The largest downside to ForumBee is their unwillingness to connect on the phone." "As someone who tested multiple knowledge management systems over the course of a year and could never find something that met all our needs, Forumbee solved so many of our problems." "For example, text formatting transferred from another document is not always retained. Additionally, the more our community/posts grow, the more difficult it becomes to search with accuracy." "It can be a little difficult to keep track of all the users. I feel it can visually become a little cluttered and disorganized."	no, not available	premium plan at 250 dollars, enterprise plan at 750 dollars, and a custom plan	

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Website Toolbox	Website Toolbox offers users one of the easiest ways to create a forum in a few steps. It allows you to choose from a collection of themes and integrate the applications or even go stand-alone. Integrations that Website Toolbox offers include Wix, WordPress, Shopify, Squarespace including others. You can then earn in different ways including advertisements, subscription-based plans, and even accept donations and get sponsors.	Attract more audience by embedding the latest discussion topics in your website, and add videos, photos, and files in your forums to keep your audience engaged. Customize your community forum with your logo and branding, domain name, website layout, and customize themes to match your branding style.	Although it is possible to create different user groups and run two or more separate discussion forums with the same account - this is cumbersome and stressful. Templates are outdated looking, fonts are outdated. Nearly impossible to filter into other social media sites, which is the main thing all of my users are looking for. It's extremely difficult to organize topics, people post everywhere. People complain it's hard to follow conversations. I also do not like not being able to customize the url.	no, not available	starts at 39 dollars a month, then there is a 99 dollars a month and 299 dollars a month plans	
MemberPress*	Very easy to set up, MemberPress is a plugin for WordPress that allows you to build membership sites, sell courses, and other digital downloads with full control. it is the most powerful WordPress membership plugin	gives you the option to manage subscriptions, grant/revoke access to specific content based on their plan, integrate with third party apps like paypal, and access to priority support, affiliate program, content dripping, content protection and other features	"I originally purchased WooCommerce and had a lot of trouble trying to configure it for use with memberships. It required several add-on purchases." "Horrible implementation and setup - especially for anyone with an existing membership." "For sure the most frustrating part of this was the inability (as far as I could see) to turn off notifications during an import." "I am not sure why that is necessary and feel that's been the one downside to memberpress being linked with WordPress in this way."	no, not available	basic plan has a price of 179 dollars a year, but the plus version is 299 yearly and pro is 399 yearly	
Socio	Keep your community active with virtual events, virtual roundtables, topic-based discussions, networking, games, and more. Personalize the experience with customized content and messaging for your different membership levels or segments.	Full branding and customization. year-long engagment, flexible networking with meetings, posts on social walls and participation in conversations . share and manage content. very intuitive and easy to use	"The worst feature is the fact that seemingly everything can be customized." "Statistics are poor (they're currently working on that)." "The integration of the wonder.me rooms was a little tough at the beginning. There were also issues within the conference that people who get dropped from the room and had to get back in." "Our workshop moderators were really nervous about the chat and Q&A feature during sessions."	no, not available	You have to submit your email to begin your request for a custom quote	
Ambassador	Referral candy software that helps you get sales, faster through their word-of-mouth marketing. all in one referral software.	Referral, influencer, partnership, or affiliate marketing - Ambassador's platform does all of these with omni-channel capabilities to engage your customers online or in-store. they help you identify your abassadors, enroll them, and then track the ones you have in real time, incentivising refarrals by offering different incentives for different campaigns and customers.	The software is priced at a premium and the percentage referral commission share is the only drawback I see at the current time. I wouldn't mind paying a larger monthly fee, versus annual subscription, for the plans that remove the referral commission share. Maybe even a lighter version would help, especially for start-ups that don't have too much cash to play with. also, lack of assistance in setting up and it takes some effort to get it setup properly. it requires an ongoing commitment and focus to make the program successful but that is more a critque of referral marketing rather than abassador in particular	no, not available	the software is priced at a premium, with a percentage referral commission taken by Ambassador. for a demo, you have to send an email. the Pro and Enterprise can be very expensive, but the Startup version is more affordable, and you can get a price by contacting Ambassador	other acclaimed options for referral software are Referral Rock, Referral Factory, and PartnerStack
Trello*	A project management service that helps you organise and run your community. You create different lanes that represent different statuses and you add a series of cards that represent tasks to these different lanes. Multiple people can add cards, edit them, add further data, and collaborate in how the work items move through the development process. You can also tie the cards to calendars and deadlines. if you're organised, then you can maximise your community building.	easy to use, The features that allow shared accountability and easy of access/data sharing and management make this a big win for remote work, staying organised is easy with their cloudbased app, the UI is simple and attractive, facilitates easy communication with your team	"It can be exasperating typing a lengthy comment and losing everything because you exited or minimised the app." "The fact that I cannot erased a card it's quite annoying sometimes. In addition to that, the fact that there is no side scroll with the mouse is a bit annoying as well." "The task management system is bad and when the project gets to an operational phase, the performance of the team suffers." "I hate the way that they don't have a customer for Linux. I likewise hate that it's an electronic application that you must be online to utilize." Limitations on the number of boards you can have and share with your team - this may be because I have the free version; customer support is terrible and they don't know their product; when I had to contact them for a question, they read from their online FAQs and their FAQ section contradicted itself - after >60 minutes I hung up because they couldn't explain a solution to what I needed and seemed confused by their contradictory FAQ section	Yes	5, 10 and a customisable tailored price depending on customer base for their enterprise package	This one for its organisational features and its easy user friendly features
Buffer*	Pre-schedule content to post at the most effective times. This means you can schedule your content, and at all times your next week of social media should be set to post, ready to go.	you can sit down, schedule a weeks worth of content to post, and then it does the rest for you, saving you time over the week. it also provides analytics. it is very easy to use and intuitive.	Manual submission, but we found a work-around for WordPress; there's a plugin called WP to Buffer Pro, utilized to schedule to all social media sites straight from WordPress, extremely easy. Aside from that, if you don't have a premium membership, the maximum number of planned tasks is limited to 10, requiring you to schedule often.	Yes	They have a 15, 99, or 199 dollar plans	
[**Referral Factory**](#)	Referral Factory uses referral marketing to help you 'build your own referral program in under five minutes,' and all in one, simple, easy to customise software.	Referral Factory is a good fit due to its large range of choices, the ability to set your own rewards, and tailored campaigns that you can create for your business, employing your own artistic vision.	Customization of templates can be difficult and some commentators have mentioned the UX is a little outdated	Yes, a 15-day trial before first payment of any plan	3 plans: USD$95 per month USD$200 per month USD$300 per month	
Discourse*	engage in searchable discussions with your customers fans and team members, create a self-service hub of common questions, interesting ideas and useful discussion, discuss more, moderate less with their automatic trust system and customise the style, integrate favourite services and create the community you want	Instead of breaking conversations into pages, it allows you to follow the same conversation with a simple scroll down. It has an active notification system for users who have engaged in any discussion thread. Whenever I have a complaint, I can bring it to the Discourse community at meta.discourse.org and see if others agree. When the concern is shared, the Discourse team will work to improve the product within months.	can't deploy Discourse without a domain,	discourse is a free open source forum software, but if you want to maange forum hosting, you have to pay a fee	teams, standard, buisness and enterprise plans from 20, 100, 300 month and then enterprise which you have to contact them for	
Medium	*We're still researching this - more details coming soon!*					
Khoros Communities	*We're still researching this - more details coming soon!*					
Vanilla Forums	*We're still researching this - more details coming soon!*					
exo Platform	*We're still researching this - more details coming soon!*					
LinkedIn	*We're still researching this - more details coming soon!*					
Almabase	*We're still researching this - more details coming soon!*					