Viva Engage Benchmarking Report

2023/24 SWOOP Analytics®'
Viva Engage Benchmarking

DR. LAURENCE LOCK LEE
Co-Founder & Chief Scientist

SHARON DAWSON
Director, External Relations & Communications

SWOOP
collaboration analytics

Contents

Executive Summary

This is SWOOP Analytics' ninth annual Viva Engage Benchmarking Report (formerly Yammer benchmarking). It is the world's largest and most comprehensive analysis of Viva Engage networks from across the world, based on real-life data.

In our 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking we analyzed more than **23 million Viva Engage interactions** from almost **five million employees** across **97 organizations**. We also did a deep analysis into almost **5,000 Viva Engage communities** across 73 organizations which we identified as "active", in that they had regular activity (post, replies and reactions) within the six-month period we assessed.

We have used this data, combined with extensive research, to shape benchmarks on "what good looks like" for Viva Engage usage, along with tips and practical advice on how to improve employee engagement on Viva Engage. We have also given directions on how to track these benchmarked measures with **SWOOP Analytics**.

In this latest analysis of Viva Engage, we found more people than ever are using Viva Engage by reading posts. The price for this growth, however, is that proportionally fewer people are engaging in conversations to form two-way relationships.

A trend we have seen emerging over the past few years is that our metrics which detect one-way interactions have increased, whereas many metrics that detect two-way engagement are decreasing.

At the same time, the number of people working in hybrid or remote settings has greatly increased compared with pre-pandemic levels, and it is now even more imperative to maintain digital relationships across the organization and work out loud by sharing what you are working on and asking for, or offering, help when needed.

Our findings highlight the opportunity to capitalize on the increase in Viva Engage readership by encouraging people to interact in conversation-based communities to better deliver business value. SWOOP Analytics' mission is to help people and organizations become better collaborators and communicators, and we have included in this report a manifesto that outlines a set of practical actions and principles you can act on today.

As we report on this year's results from the 15 measures against which we benchmark, we set goals we recommend you aim towards in your organization, along with tips on how to reach these goals, and links to case studies and articles which can help.

Part of our benchmarking involves ranking the top performing Viva Engage networks and communities, and then interviewing these top performers to learn their best practices, which are shared in the case studies section of this report. It may come as no surprise that almost all of these top performing organizations and communities have a committed resource to support Viva Engage, whether it be a dedicated Viva Engage community manager, or a function of the internal communications team.

For the first time in nine years of benchmarking, a large size organization was ranked as the highest-performing Viva Engage network. Small-size organizations have historically dominated the performance rankings because it is easier to achieve higher levels of employee engagement within smaller size organizations. This year's result proves any size organization is capable of achieving true connection and engagement through Viva Engage.

Read this report to learn how you too can achieve employee engagement, connection and communication through Viva Engage.

Key insights

Viva Engage **readership levels are high, with 85% of all employees reading posts**. However, active participation is now at 27%, meaning **58% of employees are reading but not participating in Viva Engage conversations**.
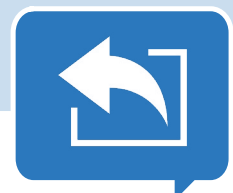
With an active participation rate of 27% there is a **strong opportunity to bring all employees into the online conversation and collaboration environment**. People need to be appropriately skilled to be able to sustain connections and relationships online.

WELCOME

While there has been an increase in Viva Engage communities used for broadcasting, SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking found the **majority of the top performing communities were conversation-based communities**, displaying high levels of business value and innovation.

For the first time in nine years of Viva Engage and Yammer benchmarking, a **large size organization was ranked as the highest performing Viva Engage network**. Small-size organizations have historically dominated the performance rankings because it is easier to achieve higher levels of employee engagement within smaller size organizations. This year's result proves **any size organization is capable of achieving true connection and engagement through Viva Engage**.

More people are bringing colleagues into conversations by @mentioning them in Viva Engage conversations, and there has been a growth in the number of Responder personas, which confirms **more people are replying to posts**. We also found a small **increase in the number of Viva Engage communities that have been made public**, allowing every employee to join the conversation. However, it seems there is a **smaller cohort of colleagues initiating conversations** with the percentage of Engager and Catalyst personas dropping, and the Influencer Risk Score increasing, meaning there is **a reliance on a smaller number of people across the Viva Engage network**. **People are asking fewer questions** on Viva Engage and there has been a drop in conversation threads per user, which is **a sign broad-based knowledge sharing is slowing**.

1   Introduction

This is SWOOP Analytics' ninth annual Viva Engage Benchmarking Report (formerly Yammer benchmarking), and the fourth to be published since the COVID-19 pandemic started. While organizations are still trying to navigate what their post pandemic future of work might look like, some of this post pandemic behavior is reflected in this year's results. Yammer has now formally evolved into Viva Engage. By name, and also the extended feature set including Storylines. Premium features including Leadership Corner, Answers in Viva, Advanced storylines and Community Campaigns are also available at an extra subscription cost.

We begin Section 2 by announcing our enterprise communication champions. Our practice is to divide our participants into small (100 – 1,500 interactive users), medium (1,500 – 8,000 interactive users) and large (more than 8,000 interactive users) for each region – the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and Asia-Pacific (APAC) based on the number of interactive users[1]. These divisions were made in recognition that it is often easier for smaller organizations to perform, compared with the larger organizations. Up to 2022, this had largely been the case. In 2022 a medium-size organization, Westpac New Zealand, was ranked the best overall. This year the leader of our large organization size, ANZ, achieved the top ranking overall from the 97 organizations benchmarked. This is a positive outcome. We are moving to the point where size really does not matter.

Section 2 also includes case studies from our leading organizations, as well as the top performing Viva Engage communities. We assessed 4,828 Viva Engage communities across 73 organizations we labelled as "active", in that they had regular activity throughout the six-month period assessed. It is the communities that provide the full color of what high performing Viva Engage networks looks like. We looked to our leading organizations, but also some high performing communities of non-leading organizations, to seek out their stories. These communities were selected from the top 1% ranked by our comprehensive assessment criteria described in Section 4.

Section 3 "Show me the numbers" shows the results from this year's analysis based on the 15 measures benchmarked across the 97 organizations. It contains measures that are comparable from year to year. By using a core set of measures, we can monitor and comment on trends that endure over multiple years. This year we identified the increase in readership along with a decline in two-way people-to-people connections.

---

1   Interactive users are those that have interacted with at least a reaction to a post within the six-month benchmarked period.

Section 4 takes a deep dive into community-type patterns. We use machine learning techniques to characterize the types of communities being formed on Viva Engage. Community types include Communities of Practice, Communities of Interest (Information Sharing), Q&A, Announcements and Low Engagement. This year we found an increase in the proportion of communities classified as "Announcements" and a drop in the proportion of "Low Engagement" communities.

Section 5 provides the results of our analysis of the use of the Storylines feature in Viva Engage. Of the 97 organizations benchmarked, we looked at Storyline data from 37 organizations that had enabled Storylines. On average, we found the adoption modest, with some 4.5% of posts made being Storyline posts and around 10% of employees having made a Storyline post. Response rates to Storyline posts were lower than that achieved by non-Storyline posts. There were some organizations that appeared to make greater use of Storylines.

Section 6 is future oriented with a focus on building more conversations on Viva Engage. Online conversations are the core for building relationships, employee engagement and tangible business outcomes. Our metrics are showing a downward trend. Specific actions are recommended to reverse this trend and we provide a list of actions to consider.

2   Who are our enterprise communication champions?

SWOOP Analytics identifies its collaboration champions directly from the interaction patterns we assess from the SWOOP Analytics platform.

2.1   Assessment methodology

SWOOP Analytics metrics are calculated from raw Viva Engage activity data and grouped into five feature categories (number of Interactive Users, % Interactive Users, Engagement, Innovation and Responsiveness). We have sought external expert judgments to provide relative importance weightings for each category, to allow us to calculate an overall performance score. Artificial intelligence machine learning methods were also used to identify community archetypes e.g. Q&A Forum, Announcements, Community, Information sharing etc. from the raw feature data.

We have also added a dimension to assess whether a community is thriving (or not). The key thriving measures relate to sentiment, growth and consistent activity. Surprisingly, it was this last factor of consistent activity that proved to be the hardest to meet. We set the bar of at least one activity each working day, on average. We found only 10% of the almost 5,000 regularly active communities we analyzed could meet this threshold.
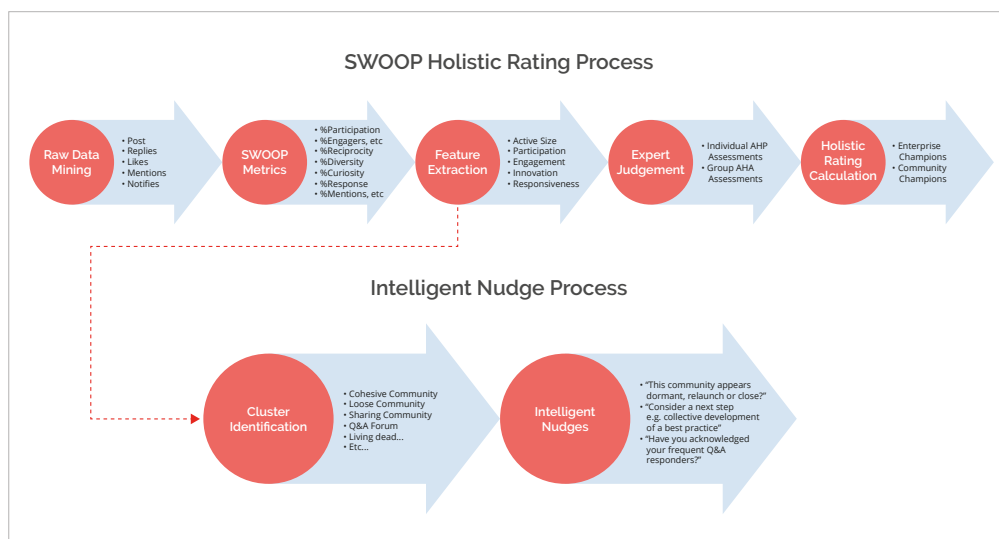

Figure 1 - Overview of SWOOP Analytics' collaboration assessment methodology.

2.2   Who are our enterprise collaboration champions?

2.2.1   Large organizations
(more than 8,000 active employees[2])

APAC - ANZ
Americas - Home Depot Canada
EMEA – Major UK retailer

ANZ

The evolution of the world's top Viva Engage network

When ANZ launched an elaborate phishing simulation on unsuspecting employees, someone in the security team blew the cover by posting on Viva Engage and warning everyone of the scam.

Some questioned why anyone would spoil the simulation by revealing the details on Viva Engage. On the surface, it may seem like a fair question. In fact, it is absolute best practice to share details of the scam in a way that gives thousands of employees an immediate warning.

At ANZ, Viva Engage is one of the best ways to get information out to everyone, quickly, and provide a platform where every person has an equal voice to join in the conversation and share knowledge.

ANZ was ranked as the world's No.1 Viva Engage network in SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking of Viva Engage networks in 2023/24. It's the first time in SWOOP Analytics' nine years of benchmarking Viva Engage (formerly Yammer) networks that a large size organization has topped the list. It's a testimony to the culture at the bank that an organization with more than 40,000 geographically dispersed employees outperformed all small-size organizations on SWOOP's extensive measures including participation, reciprocity, diversity, curiosity, response rates, @ mentions and more.

Shayne Elliott,
CEO, ANZ.

---

2   To be "active" the employee must have posted, replied or reacted e.g. a "like".

Start with executive leadership to create a culture of collaboration

This culture of collaborating on Viva Engage hasn't happened overnight. ANZ has clawed its way up the rankings in SWOOP Analytics' annual benchmarking before reaching the No.1 spot for large-size organizations in 2021, retaining that position in 2022, and claiming the overall No.1 place for all 97 organizations benchmarked in 2023/24.

SWOOP Analytics has been fortunate to ride this Viva Engage and Yammer journey with ANZ and the bank is a role model for any organization to follow. ANZ's Yammer journey started with CEO Shayne Elliott at the helm, using Yammer (now Viva Engage) to connect with his employees in genuine two-way conversation and taking the time to understand what's important to them. Back in 2019, pre-COVID-19, Shayne was asking his employees their opinions on Yammer and listening to their answers. Read about his leadership in this case study.

In 2020, when the world of work changed due to the global pandemic, Yammer went "berserk" at ANZ and Shayne Elliott was again at the helm, doing a webcast every week, with the link shared back into the Yammer Q&A Community for everyone to join the conversation and ask questions.

Under the CEO's leadership, the 40,000+ employees at ANZ have learned to come to Viva Engage and Yammer to connect, to learn, to ask questions and share knowledge. Over the years, Viva Engage has become a part of the culture among ANZ employees, and it's allowed the CEO to now take a back seat role on the enterprise social network because while his leadership was needed in the early years, almost every leader, and the majority of employees, now know to come there, and the network is thriving.

"As a larger organization it takes quite a while for things to catch on and grow over time, so I think we're just witnessing that," said Ryan Crocker, Adoption and Communications Lead at ANZ.

"Viva Engage is embedded in so many different areas of the bank and so many different people are using it in different ways that it's just slowly but surely making its way throughout the organization.

"I think what we see in our team day-to-day is probably just the tip of the iceberg as to how Viva Engage is being used."

Back to the phishing simulation. It is an example of how employees use Viva Engage to help each other, to alert everyone to news quickly. Knowledge is power and sharing information about a potential cyber security threat makes for a safer workplace and a safer bank for customers.

"Building this practice over time is what prompted people to strike up a conversation about this most recent phishing drill that really got people to stop and think," said Matt Nicol, Internal Communications Advisor at ANZ.

Ryan Crocker, Adoption and Communications Lead, ANZ.

"Employees shared how they almost got tripped up and it sparked a huge conversation in the All Company feed with employees sharing how they spotted it, and in some cases almost fell for it."

A screenshot of a Viva Engage post about the phishing simulation, seen by more than 27,000 employees with more than 75 comments.

Champion communities

As well as being the No.1 Viva Engage network in SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking, ANZ boasted five communities in the top 20 from the almost 5,000 active communities analyzed in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking study.

Among these top communities is one called Tech Talk. It's a community aimed towards reaching every employee, not tech specialists, and a place to share and ask questions about technology.

Matt said with cyber security and scams being such a big topic in Australia, there have been many questions asked and answered in the community, and it's also helped break the divide between the technology and business sides of the bank.

> "Yammer (Viva Engage) has arrived and its done away with that hierarchy so it's a completely egalitarian system," he said.

> "We're all equals on Viva Engage. That's really helped with that space where people can connect and ask questions and get answers and share success and best practice."

Some of the success in the Tech Talk community, Matt says, is the use of hashtags. #TechWins is among the most popular, and can be tracked on the SWOOP Analytics dashboard.

"No one really drives this activity, it (the hashtag) was just created and it works," Matt said.
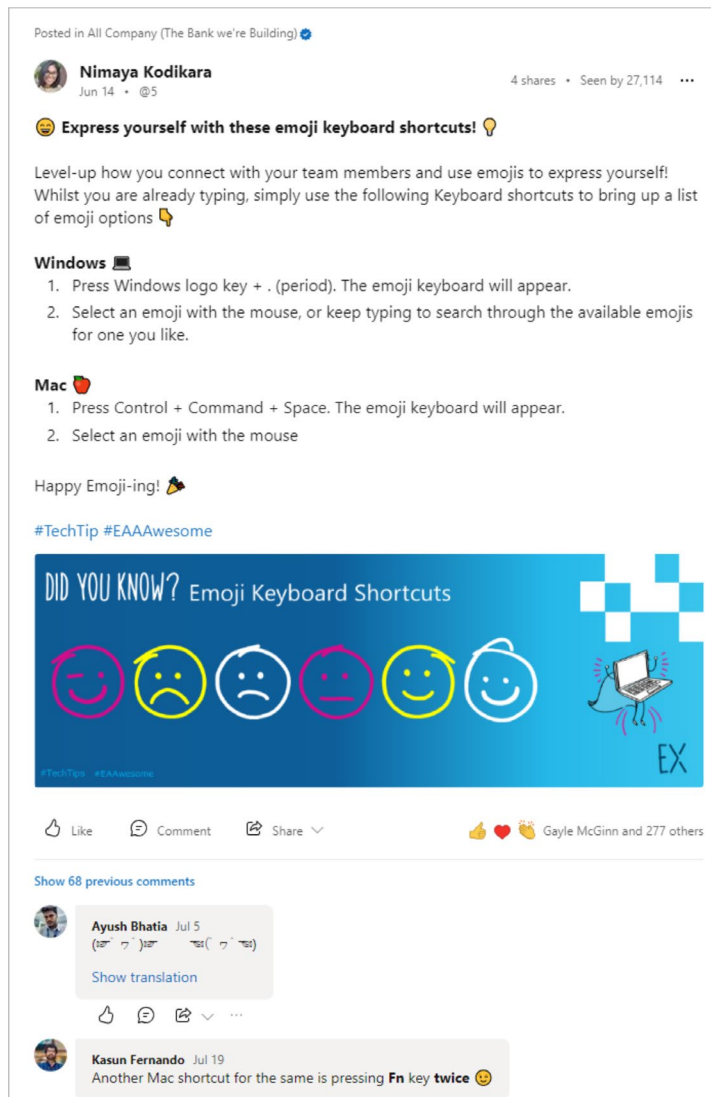
One of the most popular Tech Talk posts was shared in the All Company feed.

The above post about a keyboard shortcut to emojis was so popular it was shared to the All Company feed, where it was seen by more than 27,000 employees, with more than 70 comments.

"They are those little tips, they seem so small and almost novel but people really value them and it makes them more productive," Ryan said.

The Tech Talk community is supported by the bank's central communications team. The comms team searches for the hashtag #TechWins and collates a short, bullet-point addition to the weekly newsletter, with links back to the original Viva Engage post.

15 September 2023

The ANZ Weekly Wrap

Where do the days go? The end of ANZ's financial year is almost upon us. Which means we are mere days away from Q1 FY24! Tick tock... Luckily, thanks to the 'Get 1% better every day' campaign, we could all be 9% better by then (and that's not even counting the days on the weekends).

Now, let's wrap. Tech stuff first...

CREATE-DELIVER-TOGETHER (#TechWins)

- **GitHub process protects ANZ and customers** – Sudha Thirumurugan's post reveals that Idenity & Access Management, in collaboration with key teams, have moved quickly to automate an exemptions process for access to public repositories such as github.com.

- **"We will tax them on the beaches..."** Christophe Forni wisely went for a different Churchill quote to celebrate the launch of the Tax Reporting Platform (TRP_) AU Phase 1 – including the introduction of a single pattern of integration to store customer tax residency details.

- **Virtual and virtuous coffee** This month it was Megan and Tim's turn to host the #TechWins virtual coffee. They heard about a 7.2 *petabytes(!)* clean up of our data storage and the ongoing efforts of the always-amazing Manilla Tech Bar crew. Love the pic folks.

- **While on the topic of the MNL Tech Bar...** Ian Clet praised Virginia Ballerda and Chester Magnaye for organising a 'Grow your own vitamin C' activity and for encouraging colleagues to turn off their computers/monitors to reduce our carbon footprint. Love your work team!

- **Six wins in the fountain.** We're a long way from Rome, and the WW is no match for the Trevi, but that didn't stop Jitendra Vysyaraju and team from pitching six Tech Payments wins...the team have reaped big time and cost savings through automated regression testing and elimination of dependencies to further speed things up (and that's just the first two...).

- **No disasters here.** When is a disaster not a disaster? When it's a Disaster Recovery test...that you pass with flying colours! The Customer Service Platform (CSP) – which involves close to 900 business service offerings – did exactly that. Huge! Post from Hariharan Palanichamy.

- **The 7 stages of AI.** No this isn't an ad for Glastonbury (a music festival has lots of stages? No?). From Lvl 1 Rule Based AI to Lvl 7 the AI Singularity; it's all very interesting! Given the hotness of the topic right now, including the recent #OpenMic with Tim and VInod from the AI CoE, we'll say thanks to Anubhav Agarwal for the share.

A snippet from the ANZ Weekly Wrap newsletter, linking to #TechWins posts on Viva Engage.

Another benefit of posting with #TechWins is a corporate giving scheme whereby corporate giving is pledged by ANZ for every 200 posts, and then used to support charities.
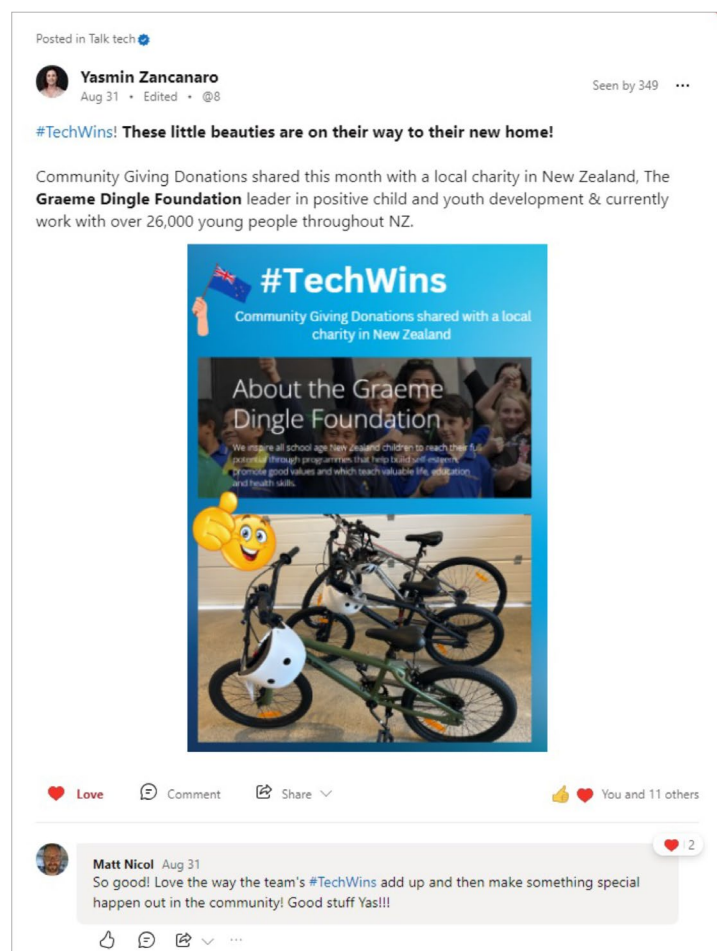
An example of the corporate giving program at ANZ for #TechWins posts.

It's not just tips shared in the Tech Talk community, but updates from leaders and others across the bank.

Posted in Talk tech ✅

David Squires
May 12 · @7
Seen by 2,119 ···

z16 Mainframe Upgrade Complete
The 4th and final z15 mainframe has been upgraded to z16 specification, this completes the z16 upgrades for Mainframe Australia.

When I look back at the timeline I'm amazed at the rapid deployment considering the new upgrade process required with this installation. It's a reflection of the world class mainframe team at ANZ. To quote IBM, *"There are not many companies in the world who can deploy mainframes as fast as ANZ."*

One of the most exciting parts of th... see more

As ANZ went through a lengthy and intense program to upgrade the bank's mainframe, David Squires, ANZ's Senior Mainframe Engineer, kept employees up to date with progress in the Viva Engage Tech Talk community. This led to a well-received ANZ bluenotes article, ANZ's engine of trust.

"The conversations on Viva Engage can, and frequently do, provide great story leads for us to share within ANZ as well as outside," Matt said.

Viva Engage is also used a place to recognize the great work down by teams and employees.
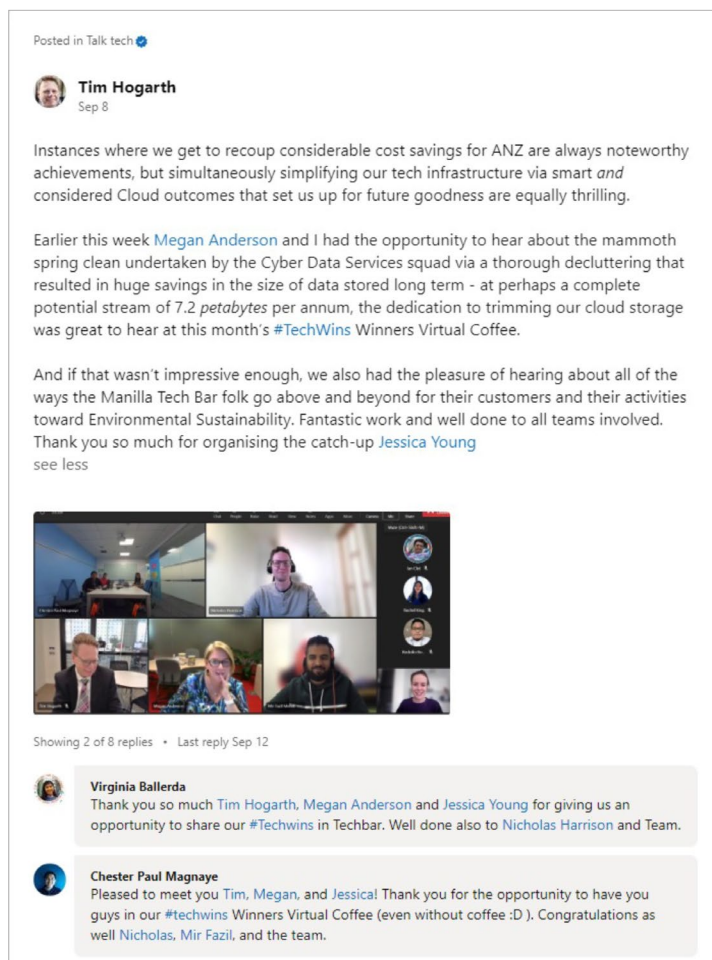
ANZ Chief Technology Officer Tim Hogarth's Viva Engage post on a #TechWins virtual coffee recognition session in September 2023.

The below post is an example of how Viva Engage can be used by anyone at ANZ to share their voice and be heard. Alex Williams is an engineer who has declared himself as a bit of a maverick and chronicler on Viva Engage, Matt said.

"He often gets very large view numbers on his long form posts, and comments showing a high level of engagement," Matt said.
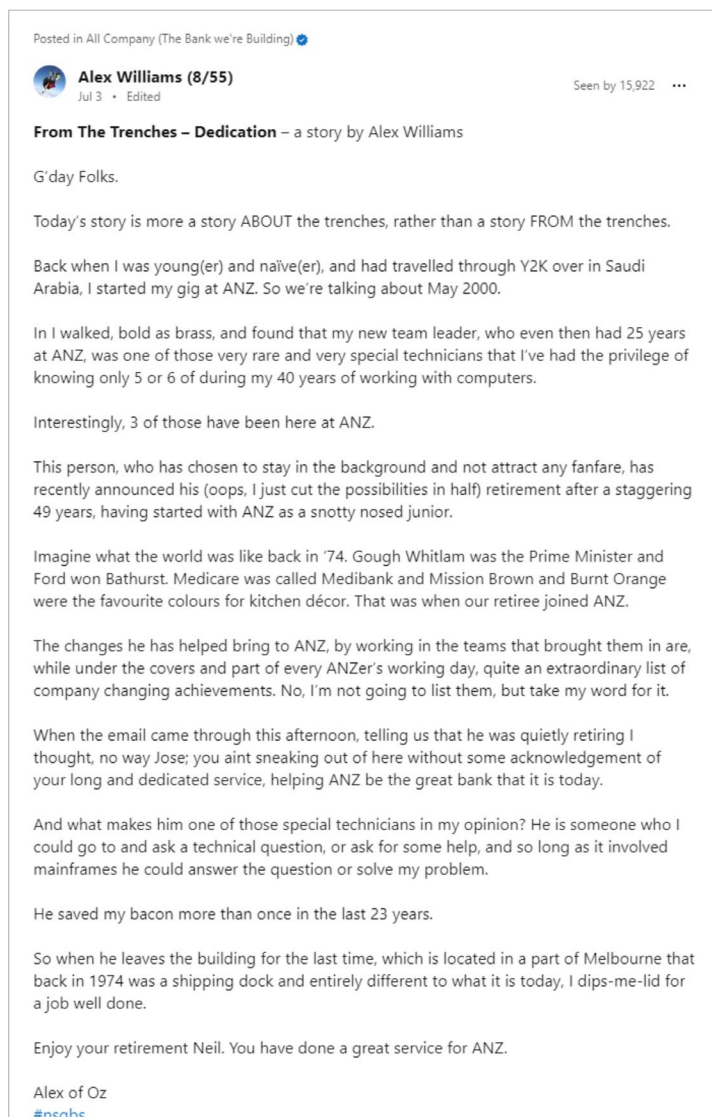
A recognition post by Alex Williams on ANZ's All Company Viva Engage feed, with almost 16,000 views.

Constant curation

While Viva Engage at ANZ is undeniably a success story for employee engagement and leadership connection, Matt credits Ryan and his team for carefully curating Viva Engage, especially the All Company feed, and ensuring posts that don't belong there are instead moved to the relevant community.

"We've educated people over the years. If you want to stick something in All Company, your potential audience is 50,000 people," Matt said.

"Really it's incumbent on us not to waste their time."

Ryan said he and his team will ask people what they are trying to achieve and help them to craft an accurate and concise post if it needs to go into All Company. Otherwise, the post would receive better engagement in a relevant community.

The Home Depot:

How recognition gets more done

When you have the data to prove it, it's hard to deny that Canadians are some of the friendliest people in the world. For **The Home Depot Canada**, the proof is in the numbers.

The world's largest home improvement retailer's Canada division topped the rankings in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking analysis for large-size organizations in the Americas.

The Home Depot's success is powered by an ingrained culture of appreciation, which emphasizes recognition, support, and gratitude towards all associates. Many Canadian leaders start the day with posts spotlighting work anniversaries, birthdays, and a job well done to their localized Viva Engage communities.

"When I log into my home feed each morning, it's a Canadian recognition parade," said Tai Collins, senior manager, internal social and sentiment, for The Home Depot.

"The leaders are very involved with their communities on the platform. It's a great way to start the day."

For district managers like David Poliquin, that recognition brings online and offline engagement together in a meaningful way.

"It starts at the top: encouraging all leaders to like and comment on posts in your store communities," David said.

"Lead by example. Likes and comments are important to the folks posting. These call outs are a great way to build associate-to-associate recognition and engagement."
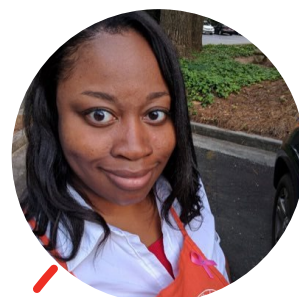
*Tai Collins,
Senior manager, internal
social and sentiment,
The Home Depot*
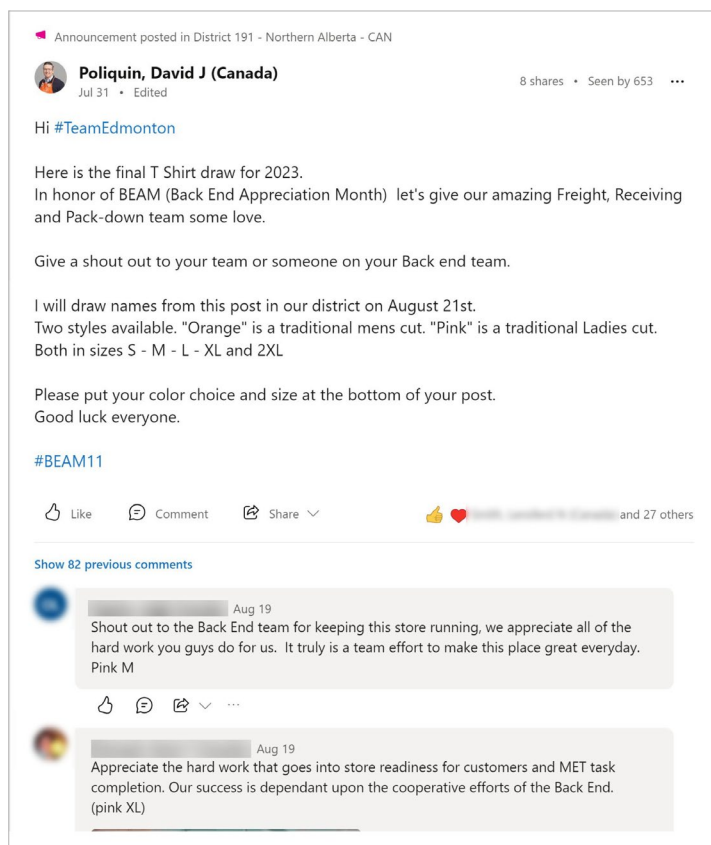
An example of a Viva Engage post from district manager David Poliquin acknowledging The Home Depot Edmonton team.

David instructs the store leaders that he manages to build content for associates that makes associates want to come back and scroll - awards with pictures, store best practices, things to be proud of, service recognition.

"Post, post, and keep posting," he said.

As for his district, those efforts have paid off in a multitude of ways, including above-average scores in annual employee surveys for celebrating successes and promoting formal use of recognition programs.

That culture-driven success also rings true in the United States for the retail giant. The Home Depot US ranked No.3 in large-size organizations in the Americas in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 rankings.

It's no coincidence The Home Depot ranked so highly in SWOOP Analytics' worldwide analysis of Viva Engage networks and communities.

"Culture is a decision driver here, including in how we strategically manage Viva Engage," Tai said.

"Nearly 45 years ago, our founders established this company on a foundation of strong values that still hold true."
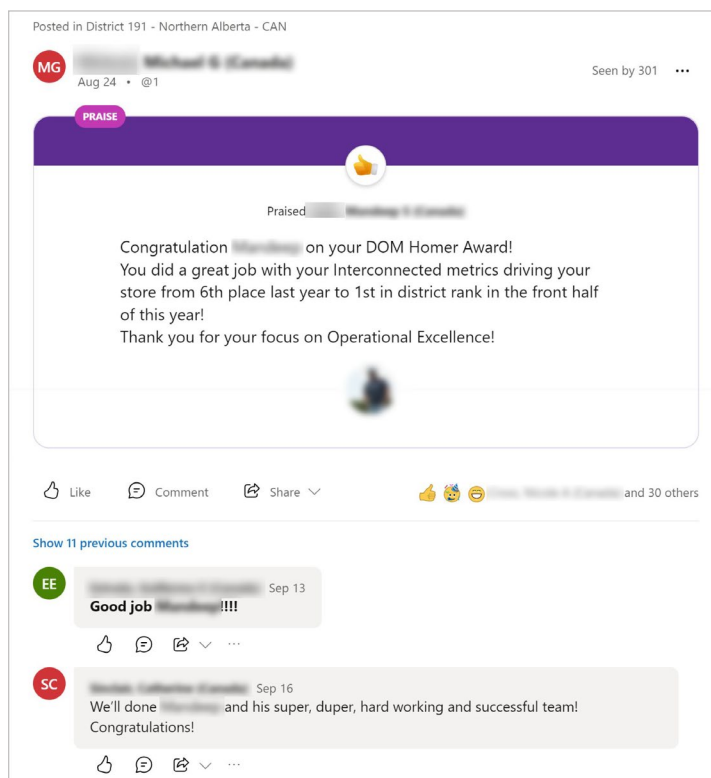
An example of a Praise post for a colleague in Northern Alberta.

Tai added that given the current global climate with wars, rising interest rates, and financial instability among the many things adding to general day-to-day uncertainty, it's refreshing to bring positivity and happiness to associates. Some of The Home Depot's biggest annual Viva Engage campaigns include appreciation weeks for cashiers and delivery drivers.

"Especially now, it's important to slow down and celebrate important moments," Tai said. "I think that's an important part of how we reflect our values on Viva Engage. We continue to do good things and we are proud to work for a company that strongly encourages doing good things."

Thriving communities at The Home Depot

The Home Depot also boasts an impressive 11 of the top 100 Viva Engage communities in SWOOP Analytics' analysis of almost 5,000 active communities. This analysis is based on measures of community performance, energy (sentiment) and growth (activity and members).

These 11 communities cover a wide range, from social communities, including an online gaming community, to business-focused communities for kitchen designers and the hardware department.

"Most of these communities have their own culture among the associates," Tai said.

Designated community managers in the business communities drive associate engagement through strategically generating content, asking questions, and posting information in their communities.

Igniting these conversations helps facilitate two-way communication between associates on the platform, encourages engagement in business and social communities alike, and contributes to a unique culture within each space.

For the second year in a row, The Home Depot's Measurement Services (HDMS) community ranked No.4 in SWOOP's Thriving Community measurement from the almost 5,000 communities benchmarked.

An associate in any store across the US can ask a question in the HDMS community and will receive a timely expert response, which is then immediately passed onto the customer. Two service-oriented associate admins for the community, Susan Brinkman and Rubi Padierna, are dedicated to ensuring its success.
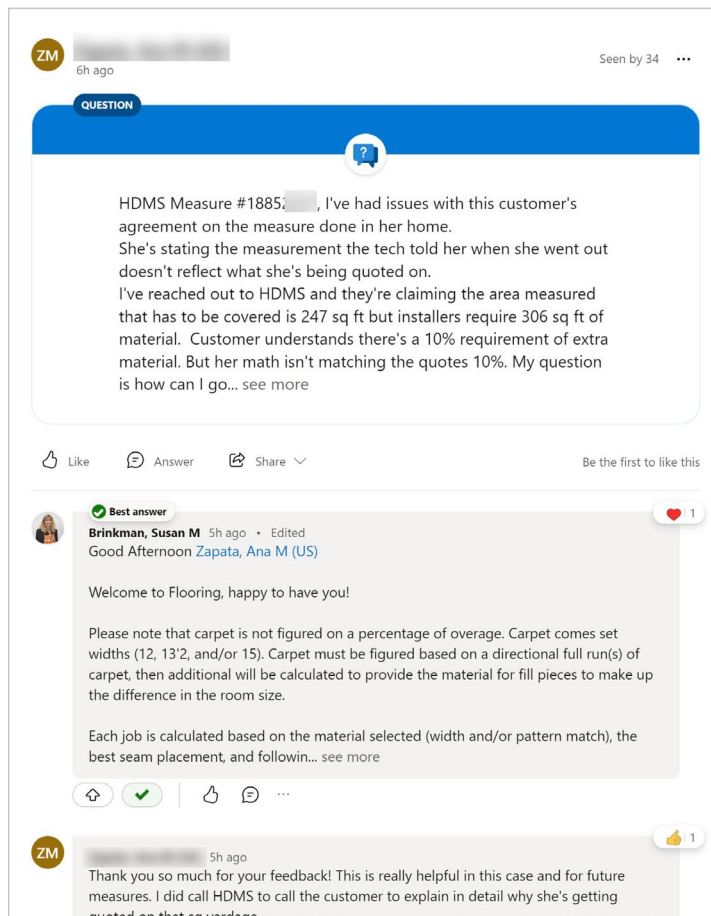
An example of a question asked and answered on Viva Engage, all within an hour.

Tai said the analytics from SWOOP have been a key driver for Susan and Rudi. Activity by Time ensures updates are posted at optimal moments. They also pride themselves on their Response Rate, which identifies the percentage of posts that receive a response in their community. The team aims to respond to posts quickly, resulting in empowered associates and better outcomes for customers.

A screenshot of a question asked and answered in the HDMS community.

2.2.2 Medium organizations (between 1,500 and 8,000 active employees)

APAC - Westpac New Zealand
Americas – Anonymous US-based global company
EMEA – Aggreko

Westpac New Zealand

How to become an influencer in a month

At the beginning of August, **Westpac New Zealand**'s Chief Information Officer (CIO) Russell Jones was not featured among the top 100 influencers on the bank's Viva Engage network. A month later, he had shot to No.2 on the Most Influential People list!

Russell came from nowhere to take a top spot on the influencers list (of more than 6,400 employees) simply by posting on Viva Engage once a week, and taking a few minutes from his busy schedule to respond and react to other people's posts.

This CIO is not on Viva Engage every day, but he does make an effort to post at least once a week with an update about what he's been doing, to recognize the great work of his team, to call out service anniversaries, or share some thoughts. Importantly, he also replies to comments, reacts or responds to other posts when he can – a true indication he is listening to employees - and tags colleagues into posts.

Russell Jones, CIO, Westpac New Zealand.

A Viva Engage post from Russell Jones, CIO, Westpac New Zealand, sharing photos and an update from his week.

Russell Jones made the conscious decision in June 2023 to start posting regularly on Viva Engage in the Technology community, primarily to connect with his team and to increase engagement. He particularly wanted to highlight the great work going on in the business, and to recognize anniversaries and other significant achievements. The added benefit of using Viva Engage was to reduce emails.

"Viva Engage seemed the obvious channel to use for this," Russell said.

"It enables a direct feedback loop, in that people can comment or react to my posts. Our people also receive multiple emails each day which can quickly fall down inboxes, meaning Viva Engage feels a better channel for this kind of communication."

And despite his busy work schedule as CIO of a major bank, Russell says posting once a week is relatively simple. He's even had feedback that people look forward to seeing the emojis he uses in his posts each week.

"I've also been really pleased that people are starting to comment on my posts with honest feedback, both good and bad, which means I'm getting meaningful input from people on what is working well and where there is room for improvement," Russell said.

"I'm keen on encouraging people to comment on my posts and to use our Viva Engage community to post their own highlights. My hope is that engagement in this community continues to grow."
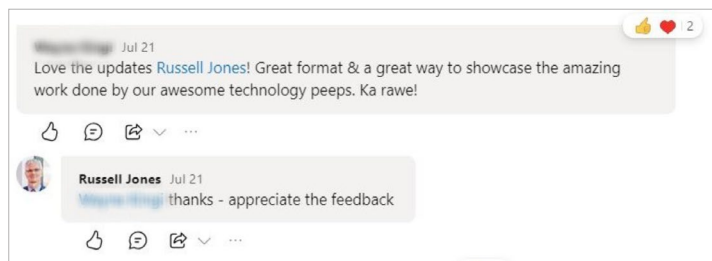
Screenshot of a reply on one of Russell's Viva Engage posts.

Leading by example to inspire others

An added benefit of Russell's commitment to engage with employees on Viva Engage is the way it has inspired other leaders across Westpac New Zealand to also become more visible and connected on Viva Engage.

"Russell's success has prompted a lot of good discussion and healthy competition amongst our leaders," said Fiona Roberts, Senior Digital Engagement Manager at Westpac New Zealand.

"Others have now followed his lead and are reducing emails and updates by moving regular communication to Viva Engage."

Fiona Roberts, Senior Digital Engagement Manager, Westpac New Zealand.
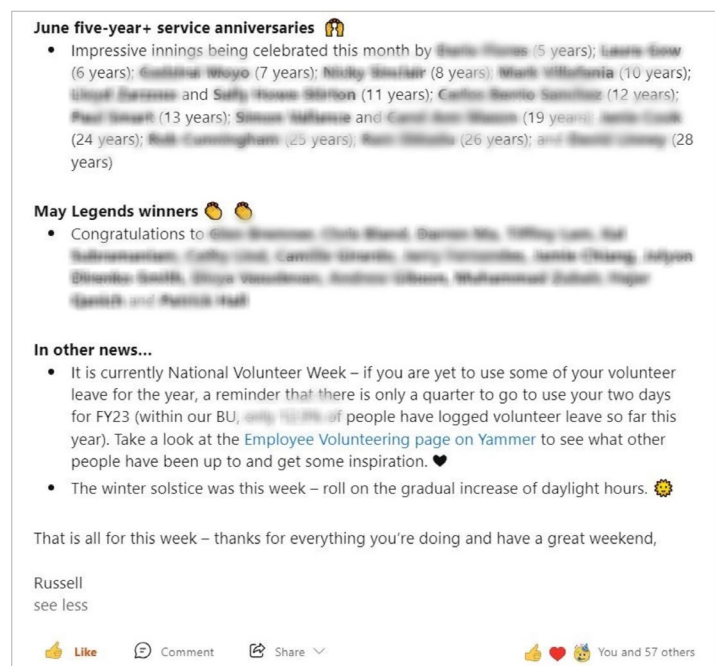
An example of Russell Jones' weekly Viva Engage update recognizing employees' good work, anniversaries and news from the week.

With this renewed commitment from Westpac New Zealand's leaders to engage on Viva Engage, it's perhaps no surprise the bank ranked No.1 worldwide for medium size organizations (between 1,500 and 8,000 active employees) in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking analysis.

Tips to become an influencer

Fiona said Russell also responds and reacts to Viva Engage posts outside of his own Technology community, which has helped to elevate him to No.2 so rapidly on SWOOP Analytics' Influential People list.

"What Russell does well is not just the regular posts, but when he sees a post on a topic he's passionate about from across the network, he'll take the time to respond to that," Fiona said.

"He also adds reactions and emojis, which personalizes his feedback.

"The simplicity of that has moved him to the second-most influential person in one month!"

Screenshot of SWOOP Analytics' Influential People report showing Russell Jones as No.2 across the entire enterprise.

Establishing a thriving community

It was late June 2023 when Russell made the decision to move away from email updates and embrace Viva Engage for more authentic connections. There was already a rarely-used Viva Engage community established for Russell's business function named "Technology" which had about 900 members. Everyone in the technology team was invited to join the community, which now has about 1,600 members.

Russell worked with his Internal Communications advisor in the beginning to ensure he had content to post, but after a few weeks he was in the habit of doing authentic posts – recognition posts, and highlights of his week posted on a Friday afternoon, and including selfies when he was visiting branches.

An example of a Viva Engage post from Russell Jones.

Russell kicked off this revamped Technology community with an announcement explaining his commitment to the Viva Engage community and encouraging people to join the conversation. By August, he was in the groove of posting regularly, as can be seen in the screenshot above.

Below is Russell's post to kick-off the Viva Engage community.
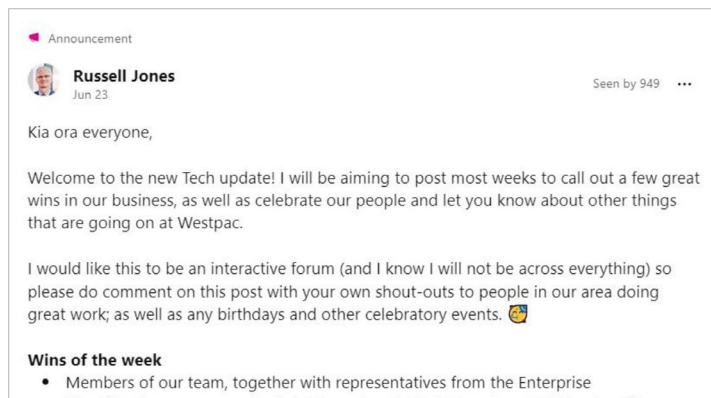
Russell Jones' initial post in the Technology community.

Fiona said in just a couple of months, other leaders have followed Russell's lead and new Viva Engage communities have been revigorated or launched.

"Leaders have now started using these communities for regular communications," Fiona said.

"They've made a conscious decision to move away from emails to using Viva Engage for their regular updates. Typically, we'll see on a Friday that leaders are there posting about what they've done in their week with some photos.

"We'll see them recognize people that have done amazing work, or they will call out pieces of work that have come to fruition. It's just been amazing, and the turnaround in engagement has been phenomenal.
"We've had big changes in a really short time."

While there's been a fresh shift to get leaders engaged and connected on Viva Engage, Westpac New Zealand has a strong culture of using the enterprise social network to connect. For the past four years, Westpac New Zealand has been a top performer in SWOOP Analytics' annual Viva Engage (formerly Yammer) benchmarking analysis.

But it hasn't all been organic growth. Fiona says the success of Viva Engage at Westpac New Zealand has been built on a foundation of strategy and passion.

"In our area we have a very clear strategy around how we use Viva Engage, and what we're going to use it for, and we align that work with our other channels and initiatives going on across the bank," she said.

"But it's important that we teach others how to use Viva Engage effectively. Our team helps people get started in Viva Engage, setting up the communities for them, showing them how to run their communities effectively, and talking to them about how to make a sustainable communications plan so that you keep things fresh.

"If you don't do that foundational stuff, people and communities can flounder."

Learn more about Westpac New Zealand's success to connect employee with Viva Engage in our case studies:
- Banking on Viva Engage & SWOOP Analytics to achieve top collaboration
- Breaking down divides at Westpac New Zealand

Learn about the impact leaders can have on Viva Engage, based on real-life data:
- What impact do leaders have on collaboration? Show me the numbers!

Aggreko

Stories from the heart

The best stories about **Aggreko** come from within, from the people who have lived the experiences. They're the stories colleagues want to hear, not the stale corporate announcements.

So Aggreko, the global leader in providing energy solutions, made the decision to replace the news feed on its SharePoint intranet with the Viva Engage All Company feed.

The All Company Viva Engage feed was renamed "Aggreko News" and all 5,500 employees now have editorial access to share their news with everyone in the business – on Viva Engage and via the intranet homepage.
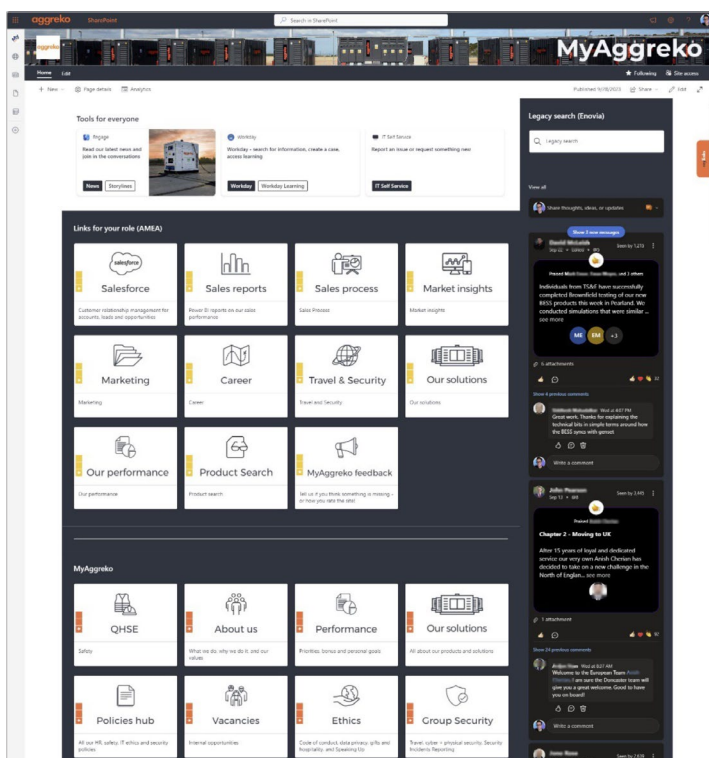
*Paul Brereton,
Head of Digital
Communications,
Aggreko*

A screenshot of Aggreko's intranet homepage for AMEA colleagues with audience specific content tiles and the Viva Engage All Company feed, renamed Aggreko News, on the right-hand side.

Aggreko wanted its people to be involved with sharing news, so it scrapped the traditional approach of sharing corporate news front and center on the intranet homepage.

"The problem we found was everything was posted by internal comms so no one else was able to share news," said Paul Brereton, Head of Digital Communications at Aggreko.

"So we moved it to (Viva) Engage in the hope that everyone would share news because there's lots of great news stories happening across Aggreko.

"If we kept the news on the intranet it meant that unless we opened up editorial permissions to everybody in the organization, it was limited to just corporate stories. We wanted to devolve editorial ownership back to the business.

"Now we've got 5,500 news editors because everyone is able to post in Aggreko News on Engage."

This approach to sharing news on Viva Engage helped Aggreko take out top honors for medium-size organizations in the EMEA region in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking analysis of 97 organizations.

Every time someone logs onto the Aggreko intranet homepage, they will see the latest posts on the All Company Viva Engage community, and can navigate directly to Viva Engage to join in the conversation.

"We wanted everyone to be empowered to share their own news whether that be a leadership update, or really great customer stories, or just something cool going on in the business," Paul said.

Not once has Paul had to remove or edit a post on the Viva Engage feed, and sharing news this way has uncovered so many otherwise unheard stories.

"It's really lifted the lid on the business," Paul said.

"We knew there was lots of great things going on but it never really made it anywhere because there was nowhere to post it.

"We only had corporate news on the home page. Now we've empowered everybody and people are sharing more and more things and I would say 99.9% of it is business related."

Paul said there is an occasional social post; "but even then there's a hook back to Aggreko in some way or other".
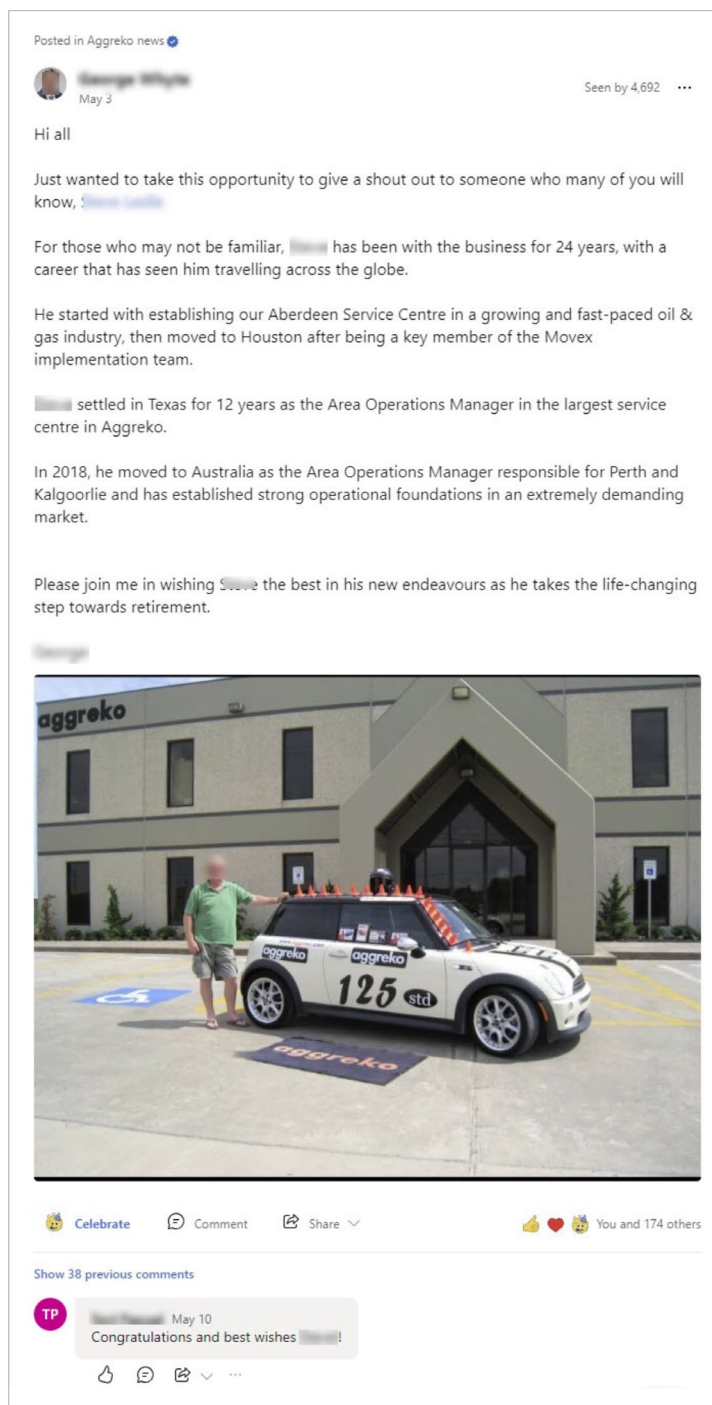
An example of a post in the Aggreko News Viva Engage community, which is also shared on the intranet homepage.

Aggreko has continually been amongst the top performers in SWOOP Analytics' annual Viva Engage and formerly Yammer benchmarking and has a healthy culture of sharing and conversing on the platform. The old intranet didn't allow for the two-way conversations, hence the deliberate move to substitute news on the intranet for the Viva Engage All Company community.

"We wanted it to be two-way and we wanted people to interact and react to the news but also we were just bored of putting the same old corporate messages up on the home page," Paul said.

"It's dull. Whereas we knew by going out and speaking to the business there's some fantastic stuff going on across the Aggreko world so we wanted to put the spotlight on it and what better way than to make news social."

It may come as no surprise that the Aggreko News community ranked amongst the top 5% of the almost 5,000 active communities (those with significant activity over a three-month period) analyzed by SWOOP Analytics in the 2023/24 benchmarking study. It was the top ranked community at Aggreko based on SWOOP Analytics' in-depth measures.

How to become a Viva Engage guru

Paul shared the journey of Aggreko's Managing Director of AMEA region and how he has become one of the most influential people on the company's Viva Engage network just by making the conscious decision to be better engaged with colleagues in the Asia, Middle East and Africa region.

Paul said this MD, who has chosen to remain anonymous, wanted to increase engagement with colleagues in the region, and he wanted that engagement to be more than a townhall approach.
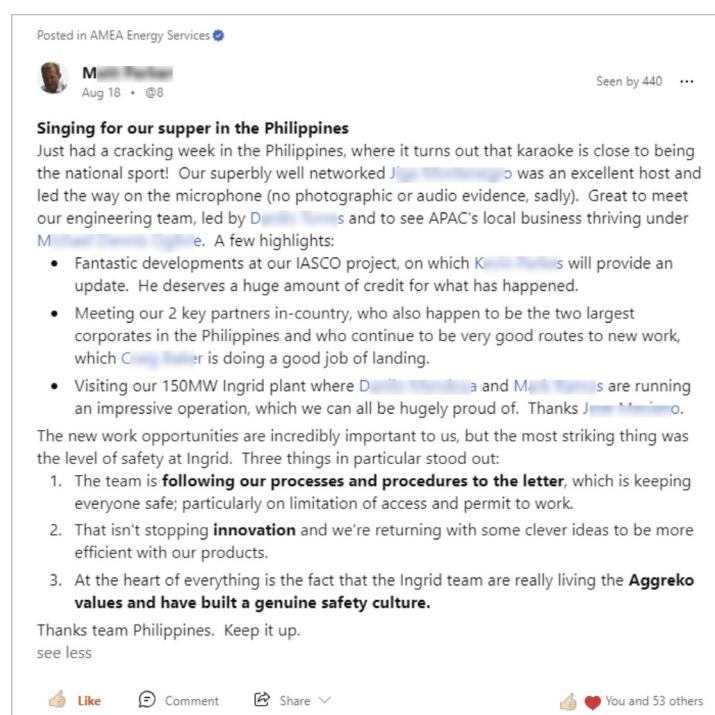
An example of the MD's Viva Engage post. He uses the @mention feature to recognize team members for a job well done.

Initially, he was unsure if Viva Engage would be the correct platform and he was uncertain of how best to use it.

"After some light-touch coaching he started using Engage and was rewarded with great levels of readership and increasing levels of engagement," Paul said.

"It turns out he was a natural and immediately became totally self-sufficient, writing his own content and posting when the need arises – and leveraging features such as @mention to bring his leadership team and/or SME's into the conversation."
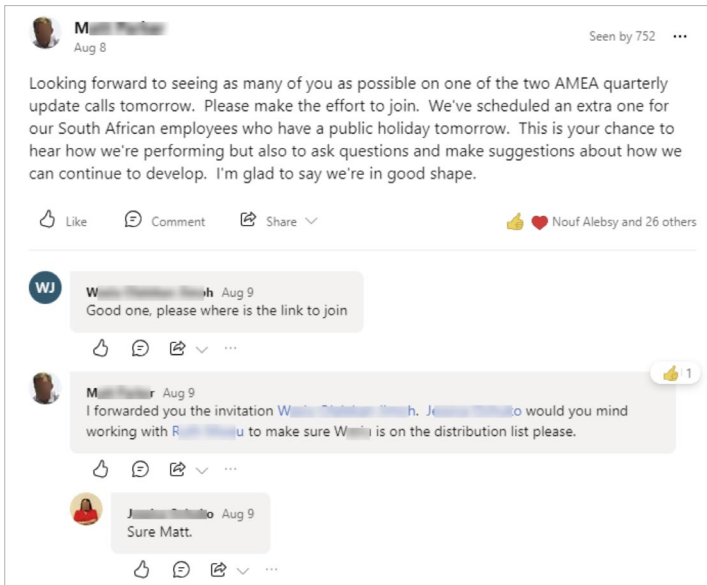
A post from Aggreko's MD of AMEA. Paul said he makes good use of the @mention feature to make posts collaborative and ensure the right people are aware and involved.

Paul said the MD's community now always features in the top five Most Engaged Communities in Aggreko's monthly ENGAGEment report.

"He has transformed himself into an Engage guru," Paul said.

"We all look forward to his posts now. He gets deep into the business."
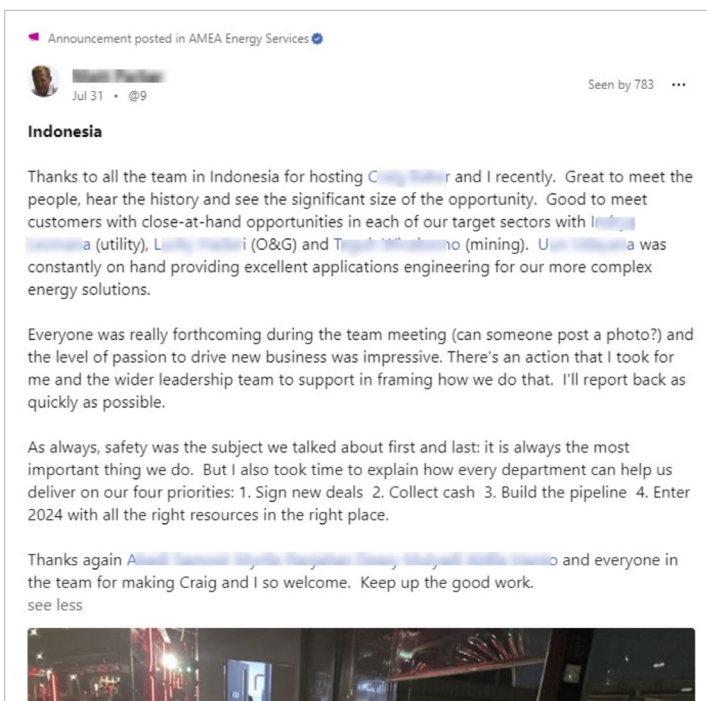
A Viva Engage update from the MD on a trip to Indonesia, along with an informal team shot.
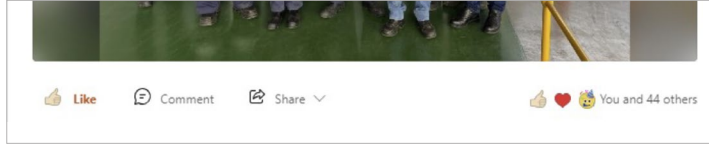
The MD posted a selfie on Viva Engage with a frontline team member, along with a group shot of technicians, which later became the Viva Engage community cover photo in the month it was posted.

Viva Engage Storylines

Paul said Viva Engage Storylines are slowly starting to be embraced by some at Aggreko. It was never consciously promoted across Aggreko due to the timing of the introduction of Storylines during a busy time at Aggreko. However, it was switched on and some people started using it.

"It's slowly taken off," Paul said.

"We're seeing lots of people starting to follow people and you see a real mix of people in there, everyone from financial planning and analysis to someone posting about a company football match."

Learn more about how Aggreko is connecting its people through it's Viva Engage photography community:
Aggreko - Breaking geographical barriers with Viva Engage

EMEA – Christian Aid
APAC – Engage Squared
Americas – RealFoundations

Christian Aid

How to get every employee onto Viva Engage

Christian Aid provides long-term development support and humanitarian relief worldwide and has been highlighting suffering, tackling injustice and championing people's rights since 1945. For an organization that works across the world – in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe – having a tool for effective internal collaboration is essential.

That's why at Christian Aid, the internal communications team has ensured there's an almost universal readership of Viva Engage, and why not engaging is not an option.

How does everyone read Viva Engage?

The main reason everyone reads Viva Engage is that Christian Aid made a conscious decision to make it the primary communications tool. Leaders and staff are banned from sending all company emails, and instead must communicate through announcements on Viva Engage.

As a result, they have helped to connect leaders to staff (and vice versa) to every announcement. Every person has a voice to share their perspective, and the number of emails is drastically reduced.

As well as stopping all-staff emails from leaders, Christian Aid has ditched news pages on its SharePoint intranet, replacing news with links to key messages from Viva Engage in

*Peter Berry,
Global Internal
Communications Manager,
Christian Aid.*

"All Christian Aid", the name for Christian Aid's All Company Viva Engage community, as well as from other communities.

The result is a thriving Viva Engage network across all communities. Christian Aid ranked No.1 in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking analysis for small-size organizations across the world, and No.2 globally from the 97 organizations benchmarked.

"The key thing for Christian Aid's success is it's a corporate communications tool," said Peter Berry, Global Internal Communications Manager at Christian Aid.

"All our leaders have to communicate and announce through Viva Engage, they can't email.

"And so we get almost universal readership of messages through Viva Engage because that's the only tool they can use to communicate to all our staff. If staff do email, it won't get readership in other channels because we can't link to it."

If, for example, there is a humanitarian crisis somewhere in the world and a leader announces it on Viva Engage, everyone is encouraged to read and join in the conversation.

"We can give staff a voice so they can respond and they can comment," Peter said.

"It becomes a conversation and that connection between leadership and staff is greatly enhanced and reduces that disconnect you get when you can hide behind an email and press 'send' and then that's it."

It's been a gradual process to get to this point where all 750 Christian Aid employees are at least reading Viva Engage. It's also worth acknowledging that not all Christian Aid's leaders have always been convinced that posting on Viva Engage, and formerly Yammer, was the way to go.

Relying on data to guide decisions

Peter and David Millar, Global Internal Communications Advisor at Christian Aid, continually presented Christian Aid's leadership with data from SWOOP Analytics to show they were reaching people. Peter and David wanted to demonstrate how they were improving employee engagement and knowledge sharing across the charity.

"We use data driven insights and while we get lots of engagement from our staff, we like to know exactly where that is coming from and exactly what people are interested in and why," Peter said.

"This is really helping us to improve our internal communications as a function, using data to prove what we do in our internal comms. It's there to drive us forward but also to highlight gaps."

What the data has uncovered is a high level of engagement across UK-based employees but more passive readership across much of the rest of the world.

"What we have unpacked from our data is that all staff are engaged, it's just that they engage in different ways," Peter said.

"So using the data is really, really powerful for us."

Using the announcement feature to amplify messages from leaders

David and Peter said the decision to ban all-staff emails from leaders in favor of a Viva Engage post was initially met with concern that not everyone would read their post. The compromise was to use the [Announcement feature](#), whereby every member of the community where the announcement is made receives an email notification.

"We could say; 'Well yes, all staff will be alerted to this message. All staff have got access to Microsoft systems, there's no reason they won't read the message. They will get the alerts and they will be able to read the message'," Peter said.

David said not every leader was initially enthusiastic to restrict all-staff emails to Viva Engage but there was more social pressure to do so over time.

"A couple of our leaders really bought into it from the get-go, but others were more cautious," David said.

"But as soon as others were posting and getting lots of traction, they did the same and got fantastic results."

He said when senior leaders post on Viva Engage using the announcement feature there are a lot of reactions but; "it takes a certain kind of personality to reply publicly".

However, posts from middle managers get much stronger engagement levels.

"It's less intimidating, I think," David said.

"There can often be a lot more conversation on Viva Engage when it's sent out by somebody less senior, and this also provides opportunities for less senior staff to play important roles in decision making and communicating updates.

"One of my favorite implications of the shift from communicating via email from senior managers, to using Viva Engage, is its easier for those who actually did the work to get the recognition as everyone has an equal voice on the platform".

Tapping into the most influential people

With these results in mind, Peter said Christian Aid is now trying to move to a less centralized approach to communications across Viva Engage by tapping into the organization's most influential people. Peter and David use SWOOP Analytics' [Influencer Risk Score and Influential People measures](#) to identify influential people across Viva Engage and work with them to amplify the messages from senior leaders.

David Millar,
Global Internal
Communications Advisor,
Christian Aid.
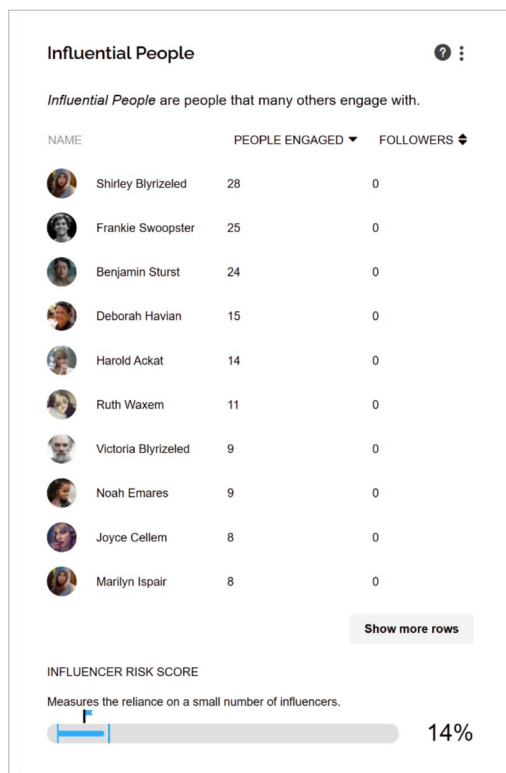
An example of SWOOP Analytics' Influencer Risk Score and Influential People measures.
Please note: this is not Christian Aid's data.

"Although the senior leaders will still communicate announcements from All Christian Aid, we also work with leaders in other teams to communicate so we can increase the number of influencers," Peter said.

"If there are people who influence globally in different regions and countries, we will work with them to communicate. We can amplify their voices so they're more likely to encourage their audiences to participate, rather than it being a centralized, top-down approach."

Using the Influencer Risk Score highlighted that much of the engagement on Viva Engage was limited to UK-based employees.

"We exported the Influencer Risk Score and we could see it was quite UK-centric so that was what influenced us to change our approach," Peter said.

"Then we were able to think; 'How can we increase the number of influencers globally?' We could work with our countries to improve that level of participation and engagement by using your (SWOOP's) influencer score and trying to improve over time".

Curating key messages

Peter said one of the biggest challenges faced by Christian Aid's Viva Engage network is that messages can get lost. One way the humanitarian aid organization addresses this is to curate key messages and announcements into a weekly newsletter which is then emailed to all employees, with links to the Viva Engage conversations.

"So if staff are really short on time, if they're working in an emergency situation and they haven't got time to read through Viva Engage, David puts together a really good newsletter and curates all the best bits from the week in all areas of our work so those things can then be found," Peter said.

"We also ensure that really key messages also point to SharePoint (intranet) pages as well, so you're able to refer back to long term information easily."

On the SharePoint intranet, news items have been replaced with each employee's bespoke Viva Engage feed so the news people see on the intranet is, in fact, posts from the Viva Engage communities they have joined.

"Doing this with the Viva Engage feed gives customization," Peter said.

"We don't use the news items in SharePoint at all, we only use Viva Engage because we think it creates too many channels and confuses staff."

Goodbye to Storylines

A feature of Viva Engage that Christian Aid does not use is Storylines. In fact, Storylines has been disabled across the Christian Aid network.

"The only people that used Storylines were people that didn't use Viva Engage very much because they didn't know how to use it," David said.

He said prior to the introduction of Storylines, people who didn't use Viva Engage often would post in the All Company feed because it was the default community. Once Storylines was enabled, those posts defaulted to their Storyline.

Because these people don't use Viva Engage often, they also don't have many followers so their posts were lost.

David said the feature might perhaps become more useful in the future, but for now Christian Aid has decided Viva Engage is more effective without it.

The importance of governance across Viva Engage

One of the keys to Christian Aid's Viva Engage success is the governance implemented by Peter and David to ensure people are posting in the correct communities and messages are being heard.

"So people would post in Storylines and they might get 10 likes but also you can't move a post that's a Storyline," David said.

"So I'd have to make a judgment call - is it worth moving? If it is, I'd have to tell them and then they're already not that keen to use Viva Engage because they don't know how, and then I've got to talk them through how to do it and it would take ages."

Peter said when Storyline posts from leaders were reposted in the correct Viva Engage community, readership increased by 10 times.

So, the decision was made to disable Storylines because in a small organization like Christian Aid there isn't a culture of following individuals online but rather one of community membership.

Peter and David also rely on the topics feed in Viva Engage to track conversations and ensure they are posted in the correct communities.

For example, posts relating to the Turkey and Syria earthquake will be posted in the Humanitarian community, but also need to shared in a Fundraising community as well. By using topics, the conversations can be tracked and also linked to the intranet homepage.

"Because we're only a team of two people, we have to minimize the number of channels we have," Peter said.

"If we just use Viva Engage, David and I can control it. It does need to be managed and that's how we get around it."

Peter and David have also reduced the number of communities across Christian Aid's Viva Engage network, ensuring each community has a specific purpose in line with their corporate priorities. The result is often larger communities, which also means lots of eyes on each post.

"We've tried to reduce the number of groups (communities) and also control how people create Viva Engage groups so we create a very much corporate internal collaboration tool so it's geared around our key areas of work," Peter said.

"We have quite large audiences so when people do post there's more likely to be traction and they're more likely to be seen by an audience, rather than have lots and lots of Viva Engage groups, which is what we started with and we've just slowly merged them."

Working this way also means Peter and David can see where there are gaps and where improvements are needed to ensure true global engagement.

"Although there are key staff using it actively, I think I'd like to see more line managers use it as well to improve even more our global representation and I think using SWOOP is the way to improve that," Peter said.

He said to have such a successful Viva Engage network, governance has been the key.

"You have to be quite controlling actually," Peter said.

"You can't be laissez-faire about it and let it go and just hope staff will use it. You have to manage it properly and push it hard to get it working. That means getting that initial and regular buy-in from the top table, mass inviting group stakeholders to each pre-defined community, integrating into other internal communications channels and making sure all the corporate messages go through Viva Engage.

"Once you get that, then you're more likely to get a collaborative culture built through Viva Engage which is what we're looking for. We can then demonstrate engagement through SWOOP and amplify voices globally.

"It's always a work in progress, there's still lots of things we can do to improve it, but you have to really go for it. We've been fortunate that leadership have supported it."

Engage Squared

The power of puppy posts

When the CEO of **Engage Squared** got a new puppy, he introduced his latest family addition to his colleagues with a post on Viva Engage.

Sure, photos of a super-cute puppy are always sure to grab attention, but this sort of post coming from a CEO can achieve so much more than just likes and reactions.
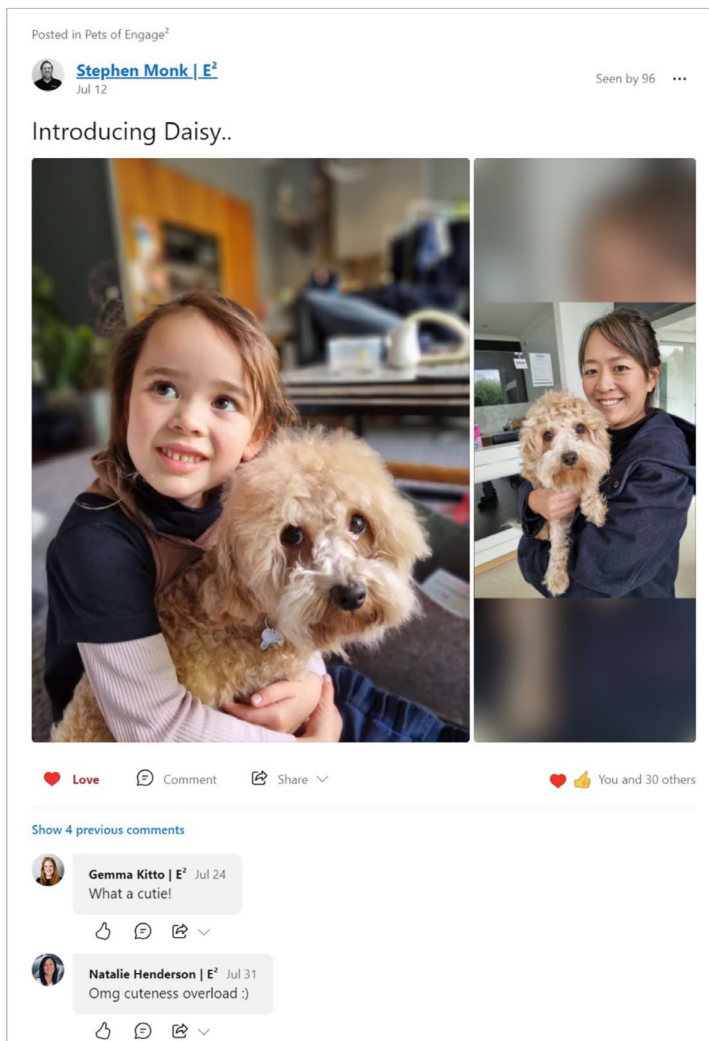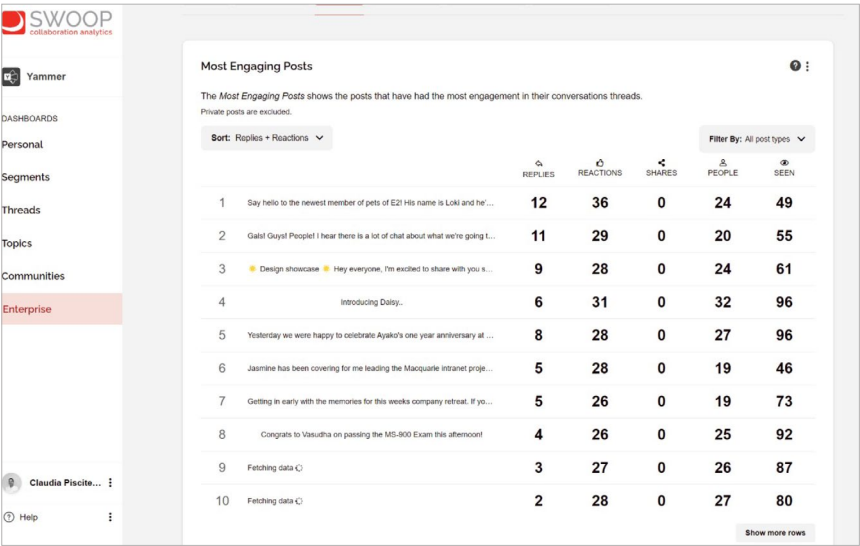
Stephen Monk, CEO, Engage Squared.

Engage Squared CEO Stephen Monk's Viva Engage post introducing his new puppy.

Firstly, a post like Stephen Monk's introduction to his new puppy Daisy on Viva Engage allows the CEO to share parts of his personal life with his employees and build connections, breaking down traditional organizational hierarchies.

It's also an example of the culture at Engage Squared. People are encouraged to share the parts of their personal lives they're comfortable with sharing, so everyone can better understand each other. It also brings some fun and smiles to work.

Three of the top four Most Engaging Posts on the SWOOP Analytics dashboard from the past three months at Engage Squared were "social" posts - two about pets and one about outfits for an upcoming company retreat. These discussions create a sense of fun and connectedness at Engage Squared.

A screenshot of Engage Squared's Most Engaging Posts from SWOOP Analytics.

The connectedness of social posts can't be underestimated, especially in an organization where employees are spread across Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Japan. There is only one employee located in each of the Australian states of South Australia and Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory, so the social posts help connect these geographically isolated people and make them feel included.

"Sharing posts on Viva Engage, like the one about my new dog, goes to culture," said Engage Squared CEO Stephen Monk.

"We have a space where people feel like they can talk about their lives, where work is not just work."

Stephen holds one-on-one meetings with every new starter at Engage Squared and checks in every now and again in team meetings. Viva Engage is the next step to keeping connected and Stephen uses it to ask people about their lives and share insights into his own.

"It all goes to that side of wanting to have a good collaborative work environment, and sharing stories about what's in our life is really valuable for that," he said.

Three key purposes of Viva Engage

Stephen said Viva Engage has three key purposes at Engage Squared.

The first is to showcase the completion of successful projects and share lessons learned. At the end of each project, a summary of the project is shared on Viva Engage, along with any lessons learned. Each post includes the hashtag #WeDoneGood, and data from SWOOP Analytics shows it's the No.1 Hot Topic on Engage Squared's Viva Engage network. Those who worked on the project are tagged in the post.

With Engage Squared offices and colleagues spread across the APAC region, sharing the lessons learned on Viva Engage allows every employee to gain knowledge from the experience and learn what worked and what didn't. Working this way results in organization-wide social learning, which helps deepen Engage Squared's project management core competency.
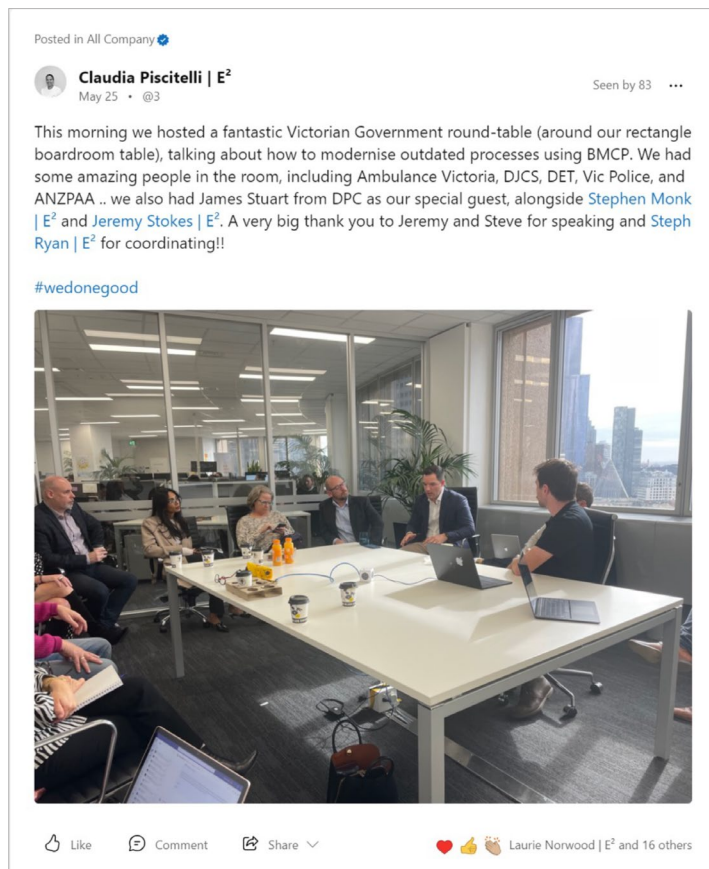
An example of a #WeDoneGood post.

"Showcasing successful projects and sharing stories about the work that we've done helps us to share those stories with potential future customers, but also look at re-using good work so that we're able to deliver more stuff more quickly in the future," Stephen said.

The second key purpose of Viva Engage is to nurture a culture of sharing and connectedness, where people feel comfortable to talk about their lives, and the third purpose is reward and recognition.

Stephen said the reward and recognition purpose is critical because it's a way to acknowledge and praise people. The posts are then amplified at the monthly all-hands meeting, with Stephen calling out the good work of everyone mentioned in the praise post.

"We share praise and take screenshots and put them into our all-hands deck at the start of each month," he said.

"It reinforces that Viva Engage is the channel where you go and praise people for great contributions by then using that as the content we talk about at our all hands meeting. It reinforces there's a business reason and side effect for using Viva Engage, or a 'what's in it for me'."

Anyone can post praise on Viva Engage, then screenshots are taken of each post and shared in the monthly all-hands meeting.
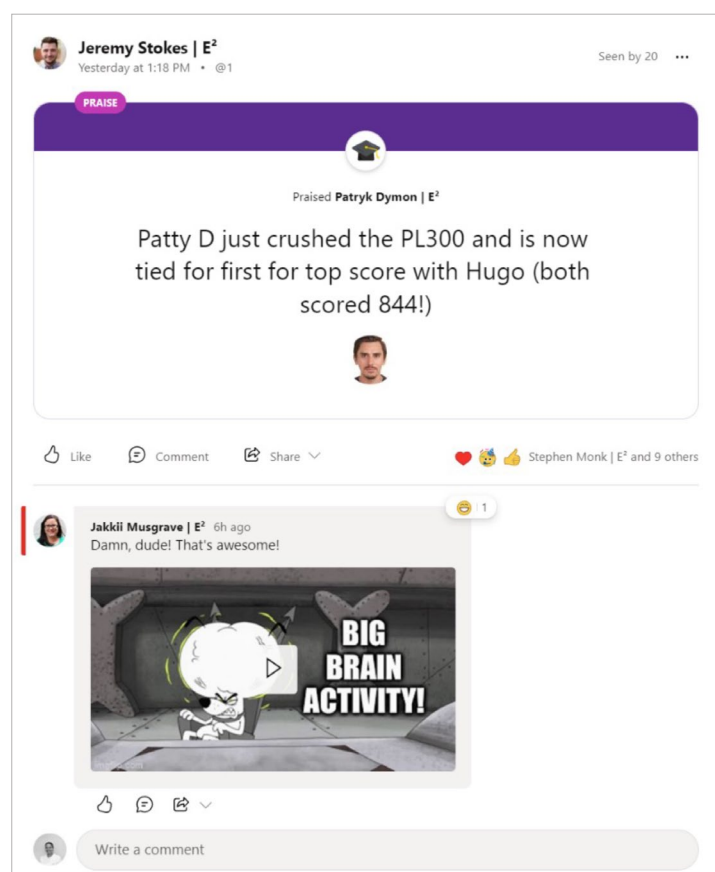
An example of a Praise post in Viva Engage.

Engage Squared was ranked No.1 in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage worldwide benchmarking analysis for small-size organizations (between 100 and 1,500 active employees, with "active" employees being those who have at least reacted to a post in the past three months) in the APAC region. Engage Squared has continually been among the top achievers in SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking across all aspects of the Microsoft 365 suite.

Practical ways to get people using Viva Engage

Engage Squared recently held an all-company retreat in the New South Wales Blue Mountains and kicked off the team building activities with a treasure hunt. One aspect of the treasure hunt was to meet someone new with the letter E in their name and take a photo. All the answers to the treasure hunt had to be shared by each team on Viva Engage.

An example of a Viva Engage post for the company retreat treasure hunt.

"So you had to go around and get to know each other and you had to create your post and put it back on Viva Engage," said Claudia Piscitelli, Chief Experience Officer at Engage Squared.

Viva Engage was also used in the lead-up to the company retreat to discuss important topics like what outfits to wear, adding to the sense of fun and connectedness.
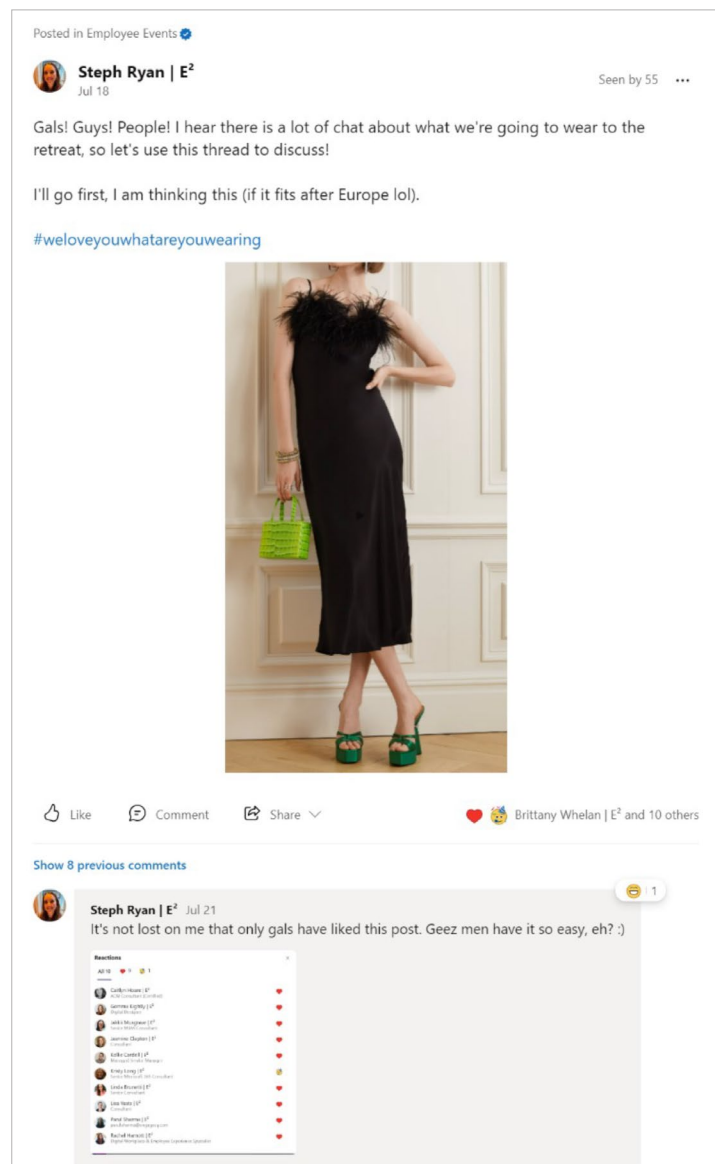
A Viva Engage post about outfits for the upcoming company retreat.

"We had the cutest pet award at employee awards night and we put up the nominees in this same community. Viva Engage is a key channel that we really use to help drive culture and connection with each other," Claudia said.

"Even though we use (Microsoft) Teams to collaborate, Viva Engage is still the place that we go to for more of that wide-spread celebration and praise and also just the goofing around with each other."

Read more how Engage Squared collaborates across M365 in these case studies:
- Engage Squared – where collaboration is non-negotiable
- Engage Squared - It's all Japanese to me
- Engage Squared - How a bot is helping with innovation
- Engage Squared - Being Team Awesome

Claudia Piscitelli,
Chief Experience Officer,
Engage Squared.

RealFoundations

Viva Engage + Microsoft Teams: why we need both

If you're working in the Microsoft 365 ecosystem, chances are you've been asked why you need Viva Engage when you're already using Microsoft Teams.

Couldn't you just have a large team on Microsoft Teams and eliminate the need to switch between the two platforms?

RealFoundations founder Chris Shaida believes he has a rock-solid answer to this question. Chris' answer is based on years of experience, which is backed by almost a decade of data from SWOOP Analytics identifying RealFoundations, a global professional services firm dedicated to real estate, as a world-leader in the digital workplace.

RealFoundations was ranked No.1 for the Americas region in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking analysis, coming close on the heels of top rankings in SWOOP Analytics' 2023 M365 and Microsoft Teams benchmarking.

Think of Microsoft Teams and Viva Engage as two separate places. Not just different tools, but different **places**, each with its own rationale.

Chris likens it to two different buildings on a unified campus, each with distinct but highly inter-related purposes, like the library and the student union.

People can read, study, research, write and discuss in both places. Neither is strictly focused on, or conducive to, a single activity. You choose to be in one or the other based on the time, mood, need for specific kinds of stimulus, as well as the expected mix of activities you expect to perform.

Chris emphasizes that this is quite different from the tool metaphor. You pick up a tool – a hammer, stapler, ruler – to do a specific thing. Then you put it down. People don't "hang out" in a tool but we do hang out and spend time in a place; and in a place we might pick up and use a variety of tools.

Chris Shaida,
Founder & CEO,
RealFoundations.

For RealFoundations, Viva Engage is the place to learn or share information about topics of broad interest to individuals, the company and the industry. Microsoft Teams is the place to go to work with a specific group of people toward a specific goal.

"We have found that the consistent use of the place metaphor has helped clarify the rationales for each, much more than the tool metaphor does," Chris said.

"We are all used to doing some of the same activities in different places. And we are all used to choosing a specific place for the complex mix of activities that we expect we're likely to do in that place."

Different activities, different moods on Teams v Viva Engage

While Microsoft Teams and Viva Engage are both discussion-based, Chris believes they are tuned to different moods, or activities.

- **Viva Engage** is the digital water cooler, or break room, where people can interact with a broader and less defined set of colleagues on broader and longer-term topics.
- **Microsoft Teams** is the digital project room that one goes "into" expecting to do focused work with a specific set of colleagues, with a specific plan, towards a specific goal.
- **Viva Engage** is more discovery oriented.
- **Microsoft Teams** is more delivery/outcome oriented.

In Chris' experience, once the place-based understanding is established it becomes a part of the workplace culture and no one is particularly confused about it.

"Virtually everyone in our enterprise spends material time in both every day," Chris said.

"People spend a lot more time in Teams but almost everyone seems to find the time they do spend in (Viva) Engage to be, well, engaging. Just like in the olden times - remember when we all went to something called an 'office' everyday - people spent time both in their assigned workgroup area and milling around the water cooler."

Chris lists three subtle, but important, differences between Viva Engage and Microsoft Teams.

- Storylines - there is nowhere in Teams where people can just post things of interest to them and, as a consequence, where others can follow that person as an individual, rather than as a team member.
- Audience default
  - **Microsoft Teams** sits on the narrow-cast side of the audience line. Chris says for each work event the first thing he does is say; "What team am I working in?" then everything flows from there. He will almost always know the individuals in a given team. After all, they are teammates. He will almost never discover an unknown person in Teams.
  - **Viva Engage** defaults to the broadcast, within the enterprise. Chris says the first thing he does in Viva Engage is to ask himself; "What topic do I want to learn or contribute to?" Discovering someone new is a fairly common occurrence in Viva Engage.
- Channels
  - Microsoft Teams has channels and Viva Engage does not.
  - A team working on a plan/schedule towards defined goals will have more inherent structure and channels provides for that.
  - With the more free-form discovery nature of Viva Engage, a hierarchical structure like Microsoft Teams channels would likely get in the way of discovery. Viva Engage can be a place to learn and knowledge share.

Where does email fit in?

It doesn't! It may continue to be used for external communication but there is no place for email within an enterprise.

"Five years from now, the only enterprises relying on email as their primary communication and interaction tool will be dying enterprises," Chris said.

"The workplace will continue to be digitized whatever the leadership of a particular enterprise does or doesn't do."

Chris uses the example of mobile phones. Mobile phones changed business communication with almost no guidance from the enterprise. It will be the same for email and the digital workplace in general. The question for leaders is whether to embrace and guide this new way of working, or just let it happen.

"We are poised to get out of the house and to other places where we can work, interact and collaborate," Chris said.

"But we are most certainly bringing both some new habits – we know how to turn our videos on, we now know that it is possible to interact and collaborate with others even if, post pandemic, they won't be in the same workplace as us – and different expectations about how our work is structured, measured and managed.

"The only real decision for enterprise leaders is whether to embrace, shape and guide this new and better way of working or just let it happen."

Chris says the "let it happen" path involves less near-term thinking, energy and effort but it will inexorably lead to departments using different tools and processes and eventually the connected digital ecosystem will slip away through these disconnected silos.

Digital workplace leaders

RealFoundations has proved to be a global leader in the digital workplace in all of SWOOP Analytics' benchmarking. The company has generously shared its best practices with SWOOP in a host of case studies, webinars and interviews with SWOOP Analytics, including:

- Addressing the physical, as well as the digital, reality of hybrid work
- Email is where knowledge goes to die - Harvesting knowledge at RealFoundations
- The secret to writing a great Yammer post
- Breaking the silos between service providers and clients
- Collaborating in the Modern Digital Workplace webinar with RealFoundations and Microsoft
- Real Foundations CEO Chris Shaida reveals his 7 behaviors for success on Microsoft Teams
- How a global organization is using SWOOP to keep employees collaborating
- Tapping into the X Factor to deliver better outcomes for clients
- Think more with Microsoft Teams
- How To Write A Great Post webinar
- What Tool When?

2.3   Who are our best performing communities?

As well as ranking the top performing Viva Engage networks, which takes into account every Viva Engage community across each organization, we also did a deep-dive analysis into 4,828 Viva Engage communities across 73 organizations we labelled as "active". These "active" communities had regular activity throughout the six-month period assessed – posts, replies, reactions and an average of at least one interaction every work day for the six month period analyzed. We then analyzed these communities on measures of reciprocity, connections, sentiment, growth, consistent activity and more to identify the top "thriving" communities. We give more details about this analysis in Section 4 of the report.

We approached the organizations with the top 10 thriving communities and asked to share their stories. Many are included in the case studies above and we have more case studies about these communities in Section 2.4. Some organizations were happy to be named, without revealing the name of the top community, and some wished to remain anonymous. These are the top 10 thriving communities identified by SWOOP Analytics for 2023/24.

No.1	**Schneider Electric**	
No.2	**Medibank** Medibank Community (formerly Medibank Retail Community)	
No.3	**ANZ**	
No.4	**The Home Depot** The Home Depot Measurement Services (HDMS) community	
No.5	**IFM Investors** All Company community	
No.6	**Progressive** (US insurance company)	
No.7	**Major UK retailer**	
No.8	**US health insurer**	
No.9	**Global beverage company**	
No. 10	**ANZ**	

Medibank

Connecting more than 80 stores with one community

With more than 80 stores scattered across one of the largest countries on the planet, Medibank's frontline team members are some of the most connected and engaged in the world.

Medibank Retail's Viva Engage community, which has recently been renamed Medibank Community, ranked No.2 in the world in SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage benchmarking analysis of almost 5,000 regularly active communities based on measures of reciprocity, connections, sentiment, growth, consistent activity and more.

The entire Medibank Viva Engage network also ranked No.2 in the world for medium-size organizations. Medium size organizations are those with between 1,500 and 8,000 active employees, meaning employees who regularly post, reply or react to posts. This measure takes into account every Viva Engage community operating across the organization's entire network.

The stand-out Medibank Community connects all 400 frontline team members at Australia's largest private health insurer, along with another 300 or so Medibank employees and executives who want to feel connected to the frontline of the business.

Primarily, the Medibank Community is used for daily updates across all stores, for recognition of employees' tenure, celebrating business successes, and for health and wellbeing initiatives like RUOK Day.

These simple uses have been the catalyst to expand the community into so much more. Andrew Carlson, Community Lead at Medibank, said connecting on Viva Engage allows colleagues to build trust, despite being geographically dispersed across the country, and results in meaningful discussions and outcomes for the business.

"It makes everyone feel like an equal or a real person," Andrew said.

Andrew Carlson, Community Lead, Medibank.

"When anyone in the business engages with a retail member, they know who they are, even if they haven't worked side-by-side before. It opens up conversation, whether it be in-person or in Viva Engage or otherwise.

"Some of the discussions flow out in other channels, because people feel like they're connected, it means you can have a bit more honesty as well, and they can ask what they need.

"I don't just look for an engagement score. I want to see if there is a connection and is that really making meaningful discussions and outcomes? That's what's happening for us."

Building a successful Viva Engage community

Michelle Urquhart, Head of Employee Communications at Medibank, said the Medibank Retail community, now named Medibank Community, was one of the first communities launched across Medibank's then-Yammer network. Initially, this community received training, support and coaching to get people comfortable using Yammer, now Viva Engage.

"They did the (Yammer) pilot and at the time we were very intentional about coaching, support and providing guidance on how to get the most out of their Yammer experience," Michelle said.

"That's probably paid off now as the culture was set with behaviors from the beginning."

Andrew explained that recognition in the Medibank Community is key to its success and has led to many more business outcomes.

"It is a really important recognition channel for not just great customer outcomes or great service outcomes but also every day we publish people's anniversaries which is a really big thing for us so people can get in and congratulate, take photos of people that are celebrating those days," he said.

"Our 2030 vision is to create the best health and wellbeing for Australia and that includes our people. We love seeing on Viva Engage how the team really put energy behind health and wellbeing initiatives and show what they are each doing in the different retail stores across the country.

"It's a really cool one when you've got more than 80 stores spread all over the country, it gives them a way of feeling like they're visually all together and sharing their commonalties, even though they can't see each other in a normal way."

Connecting leadership with the frontline

Andrew shared the story of walking into a meeting in Melbourne and a senior leader was on the phone to a frontline team member after seeing a Viva Engage post on Medibank Community celebrating the team member's 20th work anniversary.

Michelle Urquhart,
Head of Employee
Communications,
Medibank

"One of the senior leaders in the business was calling a frontline team member to say; 'Hey, I just saw on Yammer that you're celebrating 20 years today and I want to say how awesome that is that you've been serving our customers for 20 years'," Andrew said.

"It's sharing best practice and sharing community, but it means that there's a better line of sight of acknowledgment for all those other people who want to connect with the frontline. "They can actually feel they're part of the frontline to an extent."

Another benefit is the ability for senior executives to post their visits to stores in the Medibank Community to show they want to be connected with everyone on the frontline.

"It's also a page where execs can post a photo when they've done a store photo because they know they can't get to all stores in a year but it's us showing you that we're part of you," Andrew said.

"So they want to be part of the community that's posting as well, which is really helpful."

Personally, Andrew has consciously taken a step back from posting selfies from each of his store visits. Instead, he encourages people within the store to post on Viva Engage about the visit, and he will comment on the post.

"I try and ask the team to post it and then I'll comment on it and say how awesome the visit was, rather than me post to say how awesome am I, I visited the store," Andrew said.

"I'll still throw one in now and then but let the team discuss what they got out of the visit rather than me tell what I got out of it. I want it to be their environment first and foremost.

"I'm not the daily poster but I'm definitely a daily contributor through comments, likes and tagging people who I want to be part of the conversation."
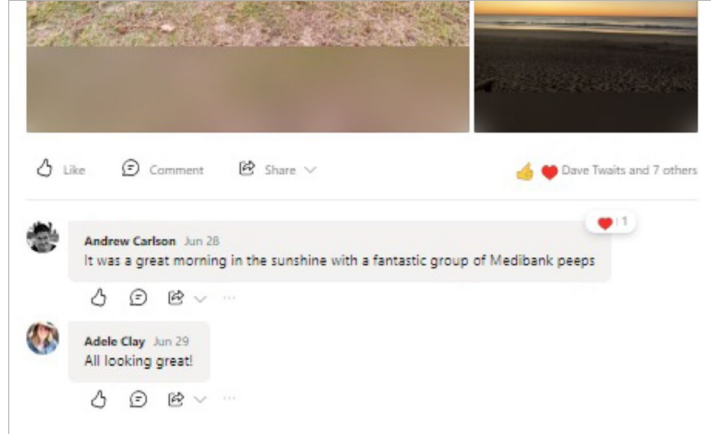
An example of a Viva Engage post Andrew has commented on.

Michelle said she never has to nudge Andrew to engage with Viva Engage posts because there are always genuine, authentic conversations happening in the Medibank Community. He has also built Viva Engage into his daily routine and it's become habitual to check, just like emails and other platforms.

"Viva Engage is a unique platform because it facilitates two-way conversation with employees no matter what their role is or where they are located so it is important that leaders are visible on there and having authentic interactions," Michelle said.

Breaking down traditional business hierarchies

Andrew said his current favorite Viva Engage community is one where a frontline team member shares podcasts interviewing other employees. Whereas many Viva Engage communities can be top-down communication channels, at Medibank they're often bottom-up.

"We've got a frontline retail team member who has created her own podcast and Viva Engage is the mode to share that with everyone across the organization," Andrew said.

"It's great to see our people regularly tuning in!"

The frontline team member invites guests and speaks with them about their health and wellbeing goals, and their role in the business.

"These are important topics for frontline. It's just really fun. No one needs permission to do this," Andrew said.

"Some of the most powerful channels are not always the biggest ones but they're the ones that create a really good avenue for people to have a voice.

"I think that's important that it doesn't have to be the best one or the biggest ones, it's about the broader community of channels that you put together."

Thriving communities across Medibank

Medibank boasted two more communities in the top 15 of the most Thriving Communities benchmarked by SWOOP Analytics in 2023/24. Coming in at No.12 from the almost 5,000 active communities analyzed is the Medibank All Company community, followed by the Fix It community at No.14.

It's no fluke the All Company community ranked so highly. Before the launch of every campaign at Medibank, thought goes into how employees can be engaged in the campaign – whether it be an internal or external campaign – and how people can interact on Viva Engage.

"When we do a campaign internally we look at all of our communication channels. Our intranet is our source of truth but one of the ways we often get employees actively involved in our campaigns is by using Viva Engage," Michelle said.

"We look at our campaign and think of the role of each of our communication channels as well as what do we want our employees to think, feel, see and do with this information. Viva Engage is a great way to engage employees and have some fun."

Over the past year Medibank has run a "Remarkable Humans" external marketing campaign which was combined with competitions on Viva Engage to get employees involved by sharing what makes you or a team mate a remarkable human.

Next year Medibank is moving buildings and employees have been asked to be creative and come up with suggestions for the names of meeting rooms.

Employees also use Viva Engage to share insights about what days of significance may mean to them including Wear It Purple Day.

Marketing images from Medibank's Remarkable Humans campaign.

Andrew said when Medibank gets it right, the momentum spills over to other channels like LinkedIn as well.

"A team will share and post themselves on LinkedIn because they're proud of the company and proud of what they're doing," he said.

That momentum trickles into the store environment as well. Andrew said Medibank is currently designing a new store, with part of the design including local content, some of which will be sourced from Viva Engage communities.

"It stitches it together to build engagement, to build connection in the company," he said.

Fix It community

Medibank's Fix It Viva Engage community is a way for problems to solved (sometimes) immediately.

People post in the community with their problem and Andrew said more often than not, someone replies with a solution. He said it's a valuable tool for frontline team members.

"It's very much for frontline. When they see something that's not quite right, that's their way of alerting others," Andrew said.

"It has great connection from frontline into operational tools. We can fix the system, fix the process."

Last year, Medibank also launched a What If community, encouraging employees to go beyond solving problems to thinking towards the future as part of a "work.reinvented" launch.

"At the time, we asked our employees to share 'what if' ideas that would help us reinvent work as part of our ambition to bring more joy, creativity and health to our days," Michelle said.

She said the community went "gang busters".

"We couldn't keep up with the threads in there. It was amazing to see the different ideas and the different connections happening across the organization," Michelle said.

"We're a year into that journey now and it's been really exciting to see the momentum build and a lot of that came just from employees sharing ideas with each other."

IFM Investors

Forget all company emails, use the All Company Viva Engage community instead

If you want to reach every employee at global investment services provider IFM Investors, forget about sending an all-employee email. Instead, post on Viva Engage.

Once you've posted your message, the Internal Communications team will amplify your message by including a link to your Viva Engage post in a weekly newsletter, as part of a snapshot of conversations that are happening across the organization.

It may come as no surprise then that this All Company Viva Engage community ranked No.5 from almost 5,000 active Viva Engage communities analyzed as part of SWOOP Analytics' 2023/24 Viva Engage Benchmarking Report. "Active" communities are those with regular activity during the three-month period analyzed by SWOOP Analytics.
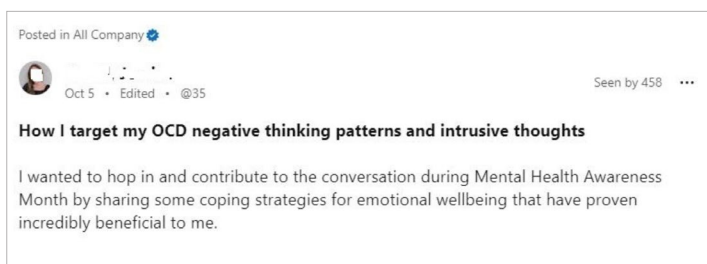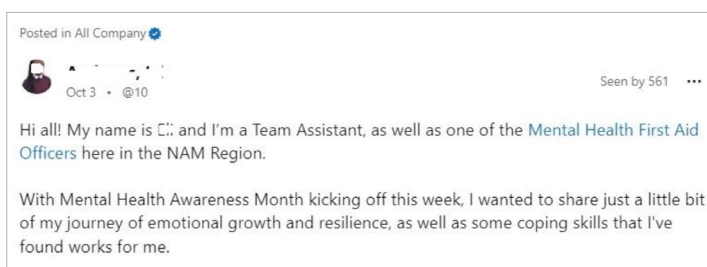
Marissa Johnson, Director, Internal Communications, IFM Investors.

> **Posted in All Company** ✔
>
> Oct 3 • @10   Seen by 561 •••
>
> Hi all! My name is ☐ and I'm a Team Assistant, as well as one of the Mental Health First Aid Officers here in the NAM Region.
>
> With Mental Health Awareness Month kicking off this week, I wanted to share just a little bit of my journey of emotional growth and resilience, as well as some coping skills that I've found works for me.

> **Posted in All Company** ✔
>
> Oct 5 • Edited • @35   Seen by 458 •••
>
> **How I target my OCD negative thinking patterns and intrusive thoughts**
>
> I wanted to hop in and contribute to the conversation during Mental Health Awareness Month by sharing some coping strategies for emotional wellbeing that have proven incredibly beneficial to me.

Some Viva Engage posts with colleagues sharing their tips for Mental Health Awareness Month.

IFM Investors has a dedicated Internal Communication team that facilitates the Viva Engage network across the organization. They "promote" posts from relevant Viva Engage communities by linking them to the All Company community, so people can quickly navigate to important conversations across the business.

By limiting all-employee emails and instead encouraging people to post in Viva Engage, it reduces the "noise" across the organization from unnecessary emails, and enables colleagues to comment, react and interact about topics.

Similarly, important Viva Engage conversations will also be highlighted in the weekly newsletter sent to all employees with a direct link to the post to encourage people to read further and join the conversation.

"We send out an email to all employees every Monday and that is a snapshot of our biggest news headlines from the week which we have on SharePoint," said Marissa Johnson, Director, Internal Communications at IFM Investors.

"It highlights some of the things we're promoting on LinkedIn externally and it also highlights two or three conversations that have taken place in Yammer (Viva Engage) during the week.

"Our insights show that people click through to those conversations regularly, due to the typically high readership every Monday, with consistent links through to the top conversations or topics we want to highlight.

"Whenever we share news and information, we'll have a call to action for people to go onto Yammer (Viva Engage) and invite questions to spark discussion."

An example of a recognition and celebration post on Viva Engage.

While Marissa and her team are following best practices by encouraging people to join conversations on Viva Engage, Marissa says people are still heavily reliant on email across IFM Investors for one-to-one conversations, and within teams and projects. So much so, people will often reply to a heartfelt and personal Viva Engage post with a private email or Microsoft Teams chat message, rather than broadening the conversation on Viva Engage.

Prompting more people to collaborate on Viva Engage is a big step towards reducing email across the organization, and thereby saving time, while encouraging meaningful interactions. However, Marissa acknowledges moving away from email remains a work in progress, and while there are some pockets of excellent collaboration, there's still a long way to go.

Laura Butler,
Internal Communications
Manager,
IFM Investors.

Governance across Viva Engage

Prior to IFM Investors launching its latest Viva Engage strategy, there was a big clean-up of existing communities, and a concentration on a smaller number of high value communities. Anyone who wanted to create a new community has to demonstrate they are willing to be responsible for engagement by responding to comments, and have content available and ready to keep the community alive and nurture conversations.

"In all our communications, we adopt a multichannel campaign approach incorporating Viva Engage, especially the All Company community, to promote content and key initiatives," said Laura Butler, Manager, Internal Communications at IFM Investors.

Another way of getting more people onto Viva Engage is to encourage people to post high value content such as photos, videos, infographics and thought leadership pieces.

"We ask people to share links to papers, debriefs on conversations they've had with stakeholders, and topics that relate to our purpose or that impact our operating environment so there's some good quality content there and things that relate to culture and engagement," Marissa said.

"When you put high value content on Viva Engage, people will go there. So we need to make sure it's really useful and great stuff, getting people more familiar with putting thought leadership on there, taking photos of events we're participating in.

"That's the primary principle, putting high quality content on there. Make sure you've got an approach, make sure you're willing to regularly update things.

"Most importantly, help people feel empowered to share what they know. When you read something that someone genuinely cares about or feels connected to, it shows.

"And colleagues are more likely to be engaged by this content. Aside from the business content we have, some of the most powerful posts relate to people's own personal experiences outside of work, helping to normalize conversations about inclusion and diversity here at IFM."
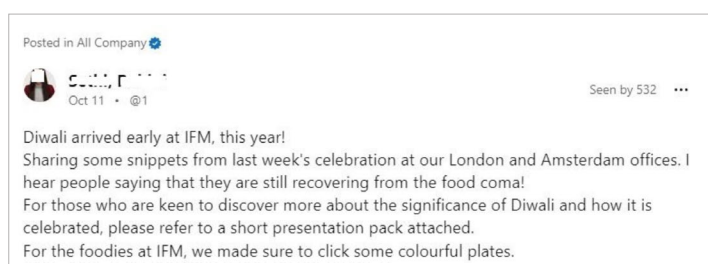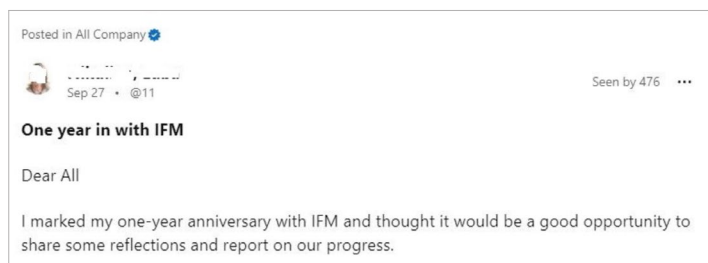
Some examples of Viva Engage posts where colleagues have shared their personal experiences.
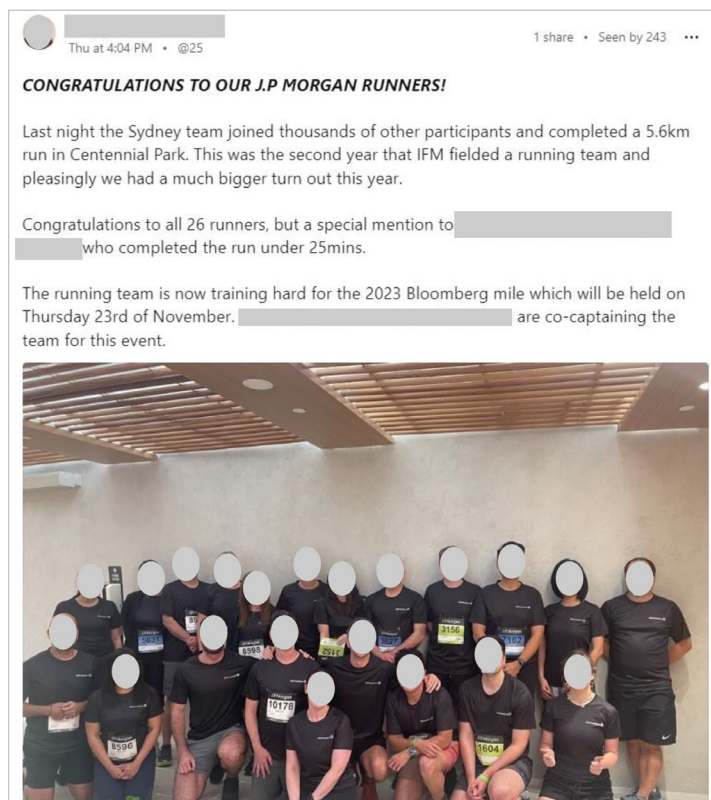
A screenshot of a Viva Engage post with a photo of employees and people @ mentioned in the post.

Looking through IFM Investors' SWOOP Analytics' dashboard, the Most Engaging Posts are those that recognize employees and teams, and include attachments like photos, videos or infographics.

Marissa said the biggest challenge now is to move people off the All Company community and directly into the relevant communities.

"Most of our content tends to go through that All Company channel," she said.

"We would like to get people into more distinct communities and more engaged in those. It's pretty much an all-in channel where everything goes at the moment."

Marissa and Laura plan to better utilize hashtags and topics to make it easier to navigate to relevant Viva Engage communities, thereby moving people away from the All Company community into more distinct business-related communities.

3   Show me the numbers

In the following sections we provide the quantitative data and interpretations that underpin the success stories we have presented.

3.1   Why the numbers are important

3.1.1   What SWOOP Analytics counts

This is the ninth annual Viva Engage Benchmarking Report (formerly Yammer benchmarking) published by SWOOP Analytics. In the early studies we developed a suite of basic measures along with an Enterprise Social Network (ESN) maturity framework (see Section 3.3.3) that we have consistently re-applied in each subsequent study. Like with surveys, when looking for longitudinal change, it is important to have a core of indicators that are measured the same way each year. From time-to-time we will experiment with new measures, some of which will find their way into our core measures. In this year's study we made a modest change to the weighting for the "thriving" dimension when assessing Viva Engage communities. The following sections report on our core Viva Engage performance metrics, to provide year-to-year comparisons, trends and updated performance targets.

3.1.2   SWOOP Analytics indicators year-on-year comparisons

The overall activity level is just one factor SWOOP Analytics uses to judge performance. Many of our measures are relationship-centered, and therefore can be strong even with lower levels of activity. The chart below summarizes the movements for 15 SWOOP Analytics indicators.
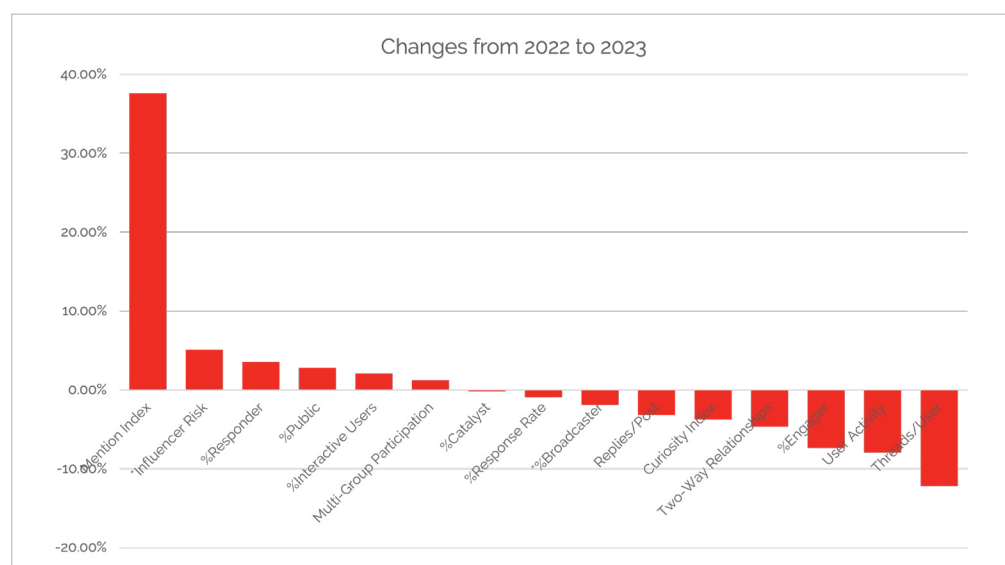
Figure 2- SWOOP Analytics indicators change from 2022.

While the trend information largely mimics the patterns shown in previous years, the leading positive change indicator, the Mention Index, accelerated even further in 2023. The Mention Index reflects the percentage of posts where one or more people have been tagged that has proven to be a powerful tactic for inviting a colleague into a Viva Engage conversation. Our data shows Viva Engage users have now embraced @ mentioning others to bring them into the conversation, which is a positive outcome.

At the other end of the scale several indicators that prioritize conversations have fallen. For example, our measures of Threads Per User, % Engagers and Two-way Relationships have regressed.

We may be seeing a growing status quo acceptance of reading and reacting to posts, but not engaging in rich, relationship building conversations.
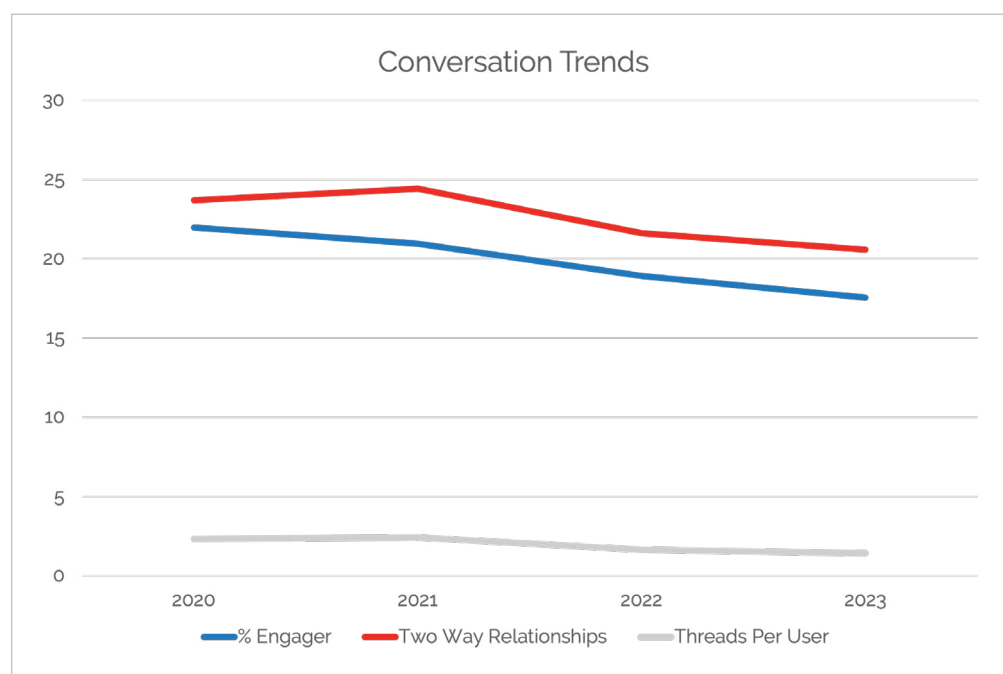
Figure 3 –Conversation trends.

The critical point is for the internal communications team not to become satisfied with just an effective content platform. Our prior benchmarking reports have highlighted how Viva Engage has provided tangible business value in the form of enterprise-wide innovation and critical problem solving. These examples still exist, as you can read in the case studies from our leading organizations (see section 2.3). Given this year's benchmarking results, it highlights that the emphasis needs to shift from focusing on content to focusing on conversations.

3.2 What might be the impact of the evolved Viva Engage from Yammer?

The evolution of Yammer, now Viva Engage, has in our view had some significant effects. The integration of Viva Engage communities into other Microsoft applications such as Microsoft Teams and Outlook has led to a large increase in readers. Viva Engage now reaches 85% of employees, on average.

In our own webinars we have addressed, with our audience and fellow thought leaders and Microsoft specialists, the differences between Yammer and Viva Engage. At the time (October 2022), Storylines and Stories had just been released. The sense of the participants was that the added premium features for Viva Engage, including Advanced Storylines, Leadership Corner, Community campaigns and Answers in Viva were all "good complements" to the core functionality of Viva Engage, which historically demonstrated its value as an active community platform.

What we may be seeing now is organizations new to Viva Engage not having the benefit of experiencing the Yammer community heritage. Many of the premium Viva Engage features that have been launched tend to prioritize employee engagement with the organization and content in general, but without the necessary people-to-people engagement, through online conversations, that builds the trust that underpins true engagement. This is evidenced by fewer replies per post and more reactions.

We report on Storylines later in this report (Section 5). While we do not address specific leader use of Storylines, its general usage has not been strongly adopted to date. Only 4.5% of posts are Storyline posts in our benchmarking, and 11% of employees have made a Storyline post.

With all the positive aspects that Viva Engage has brought to the internal communications function, it is important to not lose sight of the end game. Having well-informed employees forms the basis for strong collaborative performance. We need people-to-people interactions to achieve it.

3.3 SWOOP Analytics enterprise-level benchmarking results

We provide the most comprehensive benchmarking analysis of collaboration performance of organizations using Viva Engage, with actual Viva Engage interaction data. The dimensions for comparison are the result of more than a decade of applied research and development, focused specifically on social networking-enabled collaborative performance. This benchmarking report covers 97 organizations, almost 5,000 Viva Engage communities we classified as active, in that they had regular activity with posts, replies and reactions during the six-month period analyzed, with almost five million employees and more than

> Our benchmarking report covers 97 organizations, a deep analysis of almost 5,000 regularly active communities with 5 million individuals and 23 million+ interactions.

23 million interactions, across the breadth of industry sectors. For 2023 we have purposefully selected our sample of organizations to include only organizations for which we have data moving beyond the COVID-19 period from February 2022. The majority were benchmarked from January 2023 to July 2023; a period where organizations were progressing their future of work configurations.

Our Enterprise Social Network (ESN) benchmarking activities have identified the best performing enterprises. They have displayed the strongest performances on the key dimensions of responsiveness, engagement, participation and innovation. High performance on these dimensions cannot be achieved through simply sharing content.

3.3.1 Demographics

Our sample is formed from 97 organizations, with a minimum of 100 active participants.
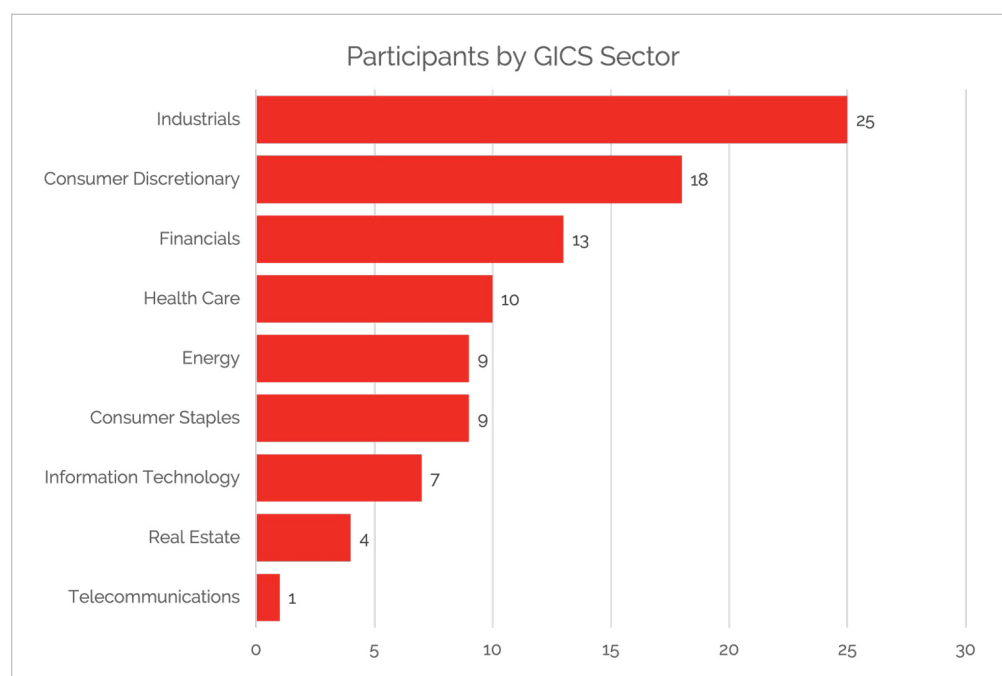
Figure 4 - GICS industry segmentation.

Using the Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS), we can see the sample has broad representation across multiple sectors. However, the strongest representations came from the industrials (manufacturing, professional services, transport, agriculture), consumer discretionary (consumer services, education, media, leisure) and financials (mostly banking and insurance).

3.3.2 Where are the biggest gaps between the best and worst?

Benchmarking offers the opportunity to learn from the measured highest performing organizations. Where large variances exist in a key maturity dimension, the strength of the opportunity is amplified. The following graph plots the average variances for each of the benchmarked dimensions:
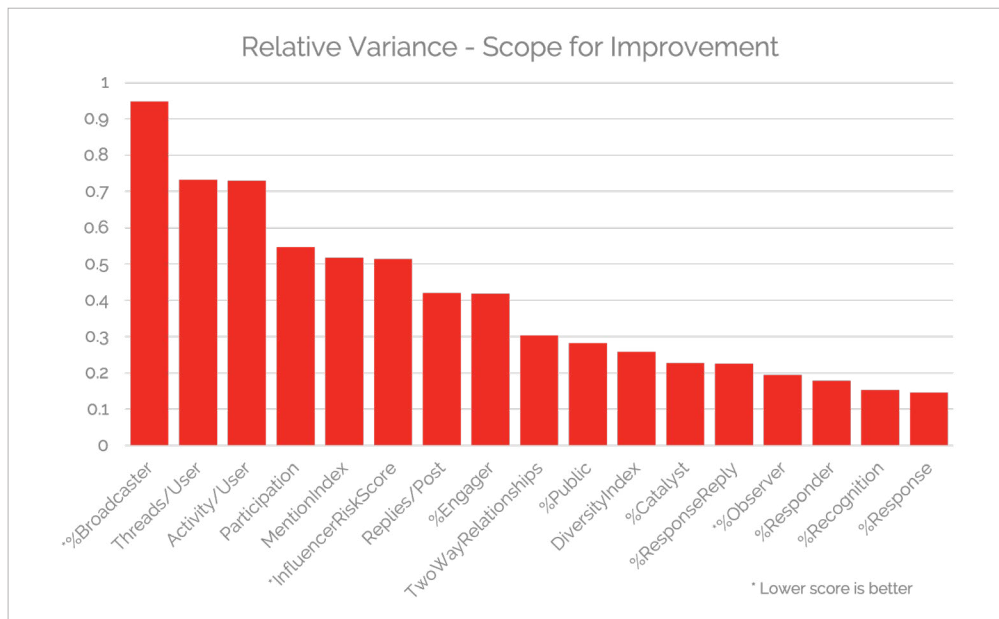
Figure 5 - Improvement potential from benchmarking.

Our 2023 results mimic 2022 where the % Broadcasters, Threads per User, User Activity and % Interactive Users having the greatest levels of variance, and therefore opportunity for improvement. The top five improvement areas were the same as in 2021 as well. The continued high variance in % Interactive Users rates can be partially attributed to the even larger average size of organizations being benchmarked this year.

Threads per User simply calculates the number of discussion threads (posts with replies) per person, and is a measure of the organizational breadth where discussions are happening. This measure would also have been impacted by the larger average organization size. Interactive Users rates are a challenge for larger organizations. For the most part, this could simply mean converting passive (reading only) participants to active participants i.e. posting, replying, reacting and mentioning. As Viva Engage adds even more opportunities for leaders to engage with employees, the Broadcaster persona should alert leaders when their posts are not engaging employees.

3.3.3   Enterprise Social Network (ESN) maturity framework

In this report we describe our benchmarks using the Enterprise Social Network (ESN) maturity framework we have developed to help organizations track their growing enterprise collaborative capabilities. Performance measures range from simple to more sophisticated, in concert with organizations' growing collaborative capability. We have established a set of enterprise targets drawn from our demonstrated best practice performers, so you can conduct your own internal benchmarking to escalate your organization's collaborative performance.

SWOOP Analytics Personas

Throughout this report, you'll also find references to our SWOOP Analytics personas, the way we classify people by their collaboration behavioral profile. The SWOOP Analytics personas include the following:

- **Observer**: Active less than once every 2 weeks
- **Broadcaster**: Is posting more than what he/she/they gets back
- **Responder**: Is replying more than what he/she/they gets back
- **Catalyst**: Is starting conversation and gets more back
- **Engager**: Equal balance between what he/she/they does and what comes back
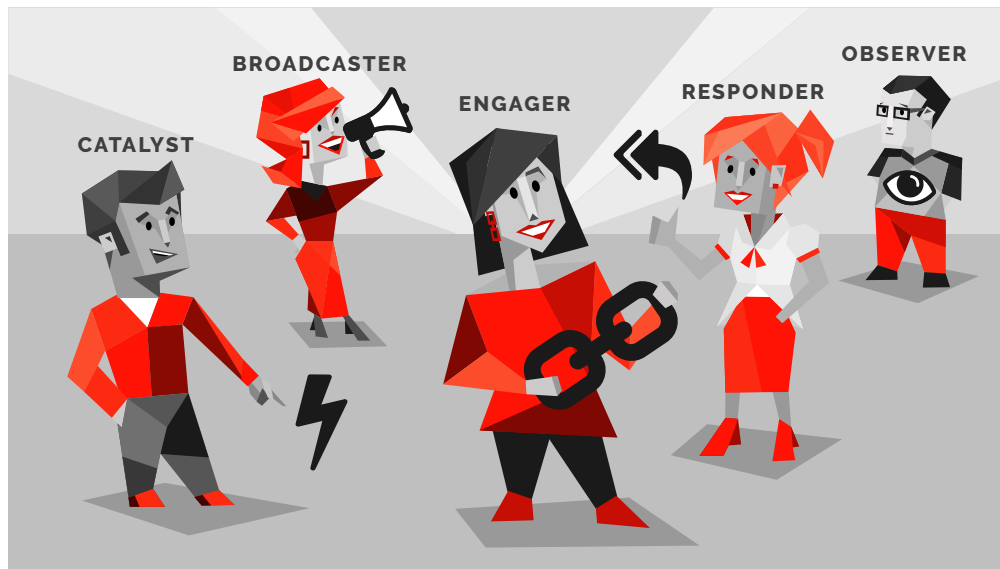
Figure 6 - SWOOP Analytics behavioral personas.

The most valuable personas are the Engager, Catalyst and the Responder. A full description of the SWOOP Analytics personas can be found on our support site. If you are not a SWOOP Analytics customer you can try the SWOOP Persona Quiz and find out which persona you are.

3.3.4 SWOOP Analytics benchmarking measures

The SWOOP dashboard measures are designed for immediate real-time feedback. The benchmarking measures are designed and calculated over an extended period (six months). The benchmarking results are used to set benchmarking goals on the SWOOP dashboard.

The maturity framework, based on prior work published by Siemens and Simon Terry[3], identifies six stages of evolution of Enterprise Social Network, from the initial stage of encouraging employees to log onto the platform, through to the use of the ESN to facilitate a fully innovating, adaptive and responsive organization. Using SWOOP's analytics, we can trace the journey from a first digital experience, through to online collaboration champion, using operational data.

---

3   Refer to Siemens' ICUP (Impact, Connectedness, User engagement, Platform adoption) Model, and Simon Terry's Maturity Model that looks beyond adoption to full business value creation.
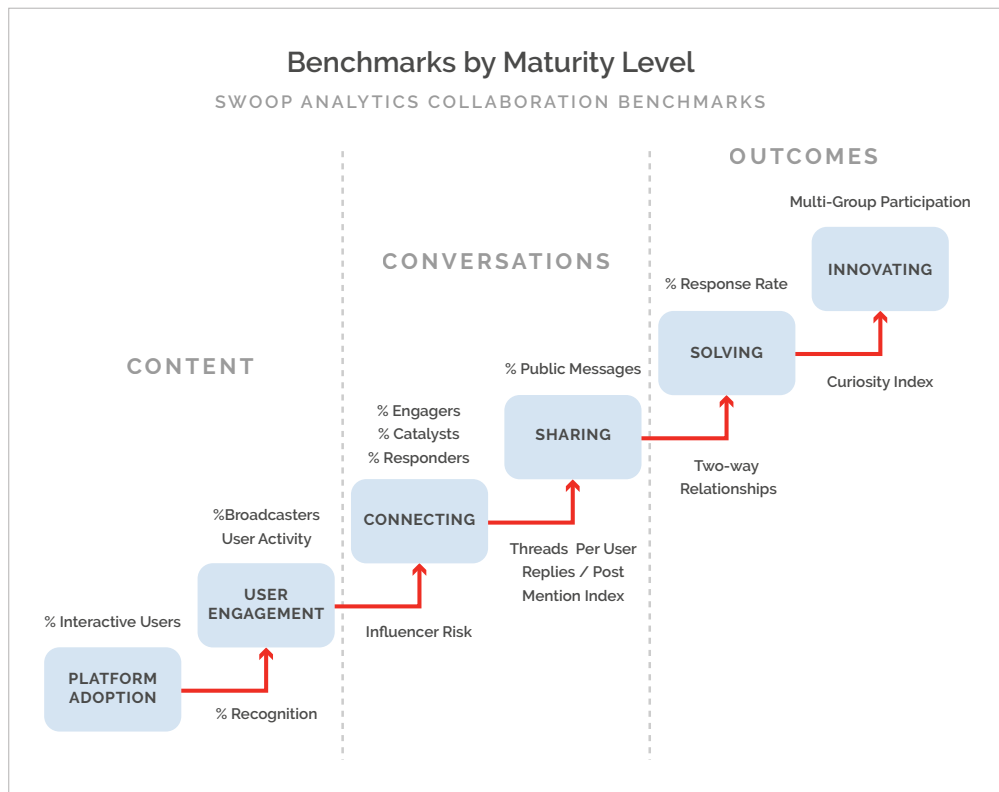
Figure 7 - ESN maturity model.

The above graphic positions each measure against the stage of ESN maturity they are most related to. Two important transitions are identified that require a significant change in the way both individuals and organizations are thinking and acting.

From Content to Conversations

The first occurs when an organization becomes less reliant on the "content" stage of the ESN maturity model to attract employees (User Engagement stage) and more cognizant of the need for employees to connect and build relationships. We call this the "Content" to "Conversation" transition.

From Conversations to Outcomes

The second important transition point occurs when we move from happily connecting and sharing knowledge to acting on that shared knowledge, to create tangible value. We call this the "Conversation" to "Outcomes" transition.

This is where the rubber hits the road in terms of tangible business results (and ROI). Everyone in the organization has a job to do. Increasingly, these jobs are becoming interdependent on others. When the job is done, be it a difficult problem solved, or a new opportunity grasped, tangible enterprise value has been achieved. Relationships can be leveraged to more effectively share tacit knowledge, problem solve and ultimately create new value through innovation. From a tool usage perspective, we might now see much of the "Outcome" activities being conducted in small, focused teams rather than Viva Engage, but it is important to sustain the connections between Viva Engage communities and the active teams on Microsoft Teams they may have spawned.

When assessing each benchmarking indicator, it is helpful to identify them with the maturity stage for which they are most indicative. The following table identifies how each SWOOP Analytics measure should be interpreted in relation to the ESN maturity stage:

Table 1 - SWOOP Analytics metrics.

SWOOP Benchmark	Interpretation
Stage 1: Platform Adoption Platform adoption is the initial stage when an ESN is newly launched, and the key motivation is attracting employees to its use.	
% Interactive Users (Participation)	On launching a new ESN platform, this should be the first measure to assess. Basically, how many eligible employees have logged into the system and taken a tangible action e.g. made a post or clicked 'like'. We have ***not included reading*** as an activity, due to the difficulties in capturing reliable data, and also because it can give you a false sense of success. This is why our % Interactive Users scores are lower than how you may be potentially measuring this now.
Stage 2: User Engagement (around content) Initial user engagement is through sharing content e.g. moving corporate news or announcements to the ESN to facilitate active feedback.	
% Broadcasters*	Internal communication was often about crafting the internal press releases i.e. broadcasting the corporate messages. This is appropriate initially when trying to attract people to the platform. *For this score, the lower the score, the better.
Activity per User	This simple ratio can provide a quick assessment of engagement with the platform. A high score indicates that activity isn't being dominated by a selected few.
Stage 3: Connecting The connection stage marks the important transition from engaging with the platform and content, to engaging with people. This is an important step in the move toward effective collaboration.	
% Engagers **% Catalysts** **% Responders**	These are all *positive personas* and depending on the context, individuals can play positive roles with any of them. That said, we prefer to see a high proportion of Engagers, the people who connect others. Catalysts are also important because of the way they drive activity and connections. Responders are seen as the caregivers and are key to sustaining communities and groups.

SWOOP Benchmark	Interpretation
Influencer Risk	This measures how reliant the organization is on a selected few power networkers. Networks will always have a core and a periphery, but if that core becomes too small, the network becomes at risk, should certain key players leave the network. A high Influencer Risk means low resilience to the loss of core members.
Stage 4: Sharing At this stage the organization is actively sharing knowledge. This may be in the form of explicit content, or in the form of tacit knowledge, shared through rich and regular conversations.	
% Public Messages	This is an indicator of overall transparency. In general, we would like to see a high score, indicating a maximum opportunity for broader knowledge sharing.
Replies per Post	This simple ratio is an indicator of how conversational a network has become. Once the volume of Replies exceeds the number of Posts, we can be confident conversations facilitating tacit knowledge sharing are starting to happen.
Threads Per User	Conversation threads per user is used to assess the breadth with which online discussions are pervading the organization. We can infer that if the majority of participants are actively involved in conversation threads, then broad-based knowledge sharing is happening.
Mention Index	The Mention Index measures the proportion of posts containing mentions. Mentions are a way of *tagging* others into a conversation as well as a form of recognition; could also be considered a *connecting* and *sharing* measure.
Stage 5: Solving Problem solving marks another important transition from knowledge sharing to action. Tangible benefits only arise from positive actions i.e. business outcomes. Organizations must reach this stage of maturity if they are to demonstrate real tangible value.	
Response Rate	The Response Rate is an indicator of both how much an organization is sharing its problems in the form of questions, and then how often people are responding to them. It is one of the most direct measures of value available. It only includes written replies i.e. excludes reactions, to emphasize the importance of conversation.

SWOOP Benchmark	Interpretation
Percentage Two-Way Relationships	This is a related reciprocity measure. It simply calculates the proportion of connections that are reciprocated. e.g. You replied to my post and I replied to yours.
Stage 6: Innovating This stage is placed as the final maturity stage, as it is an indication that an organization is creating new value. It is also something that most organizations struggle with.	
Curiosity Index	The degree to which an organization looks to improve through exploring better ways, challenging and questioning the status quo is a strong indicator for innovation. We look at the proportion of postings that are framed as questions, to identify how curious an organization is (or not).
Multi-Group (community) Participation	Successful innovation is regularly linked to diversity in an organization. Diversity can be measured across many dimensions e.g. cross business unit, geography, gender, experience etc. In this benchmark we use the diversity across ESN community activity. An individual with high diversity would be equally active across a large range of Viva Engage communities.

It is important to appreciate that while this report is assessing enterprise-level performances against these maturity stages; inside the enterprise, there will be different communities at different stages of maturity.

3.4   Stepping your way up the ESN maturity curve

We structure our benchmarking reports around the ESN maturity framework. We will report on the benchmarking results as they relate to each maturity stage. We also suggest realistic targets for each metric, based on what has already been achieved by our best practice leaders.

The following sections will report on the specific result. These results are used to inform our goal-setting for SWOOP users.

3.4.1   Platform adoption

At this very early stage, we are most concerned with getting employees to experience the Viva Engage platform. The easiest introduction to Viva Engage is through reading posts and replies. This is the case for the majority of Viva Engage users at the moment.

Maintaining the user accounts, taking into account the comings and goings of employees, is also often problematic. In previous years, we have avoided this situation by only analyzing

interactive users we could measure reliably. However, many of our clients at the early stages of Viva Engage usage are keen to know what percentage of all employees log into Viva Engage. Therefore, we have tried to make a best effort to determine the average number of employees registered for Viva Engage use. For the most part, we have chosen to use the average registered users for the most recent 30-day period.

Interactive Users

Interactive users are defined as those that have made an active contribution e.g. posted, replied or reacted. The average is 27%, with a high of 75%, matching the 2022 results and stalling a downward trend from 2020.

> **Average % Interactive Users (Participation):** **27%**
> Range 2% – 75%
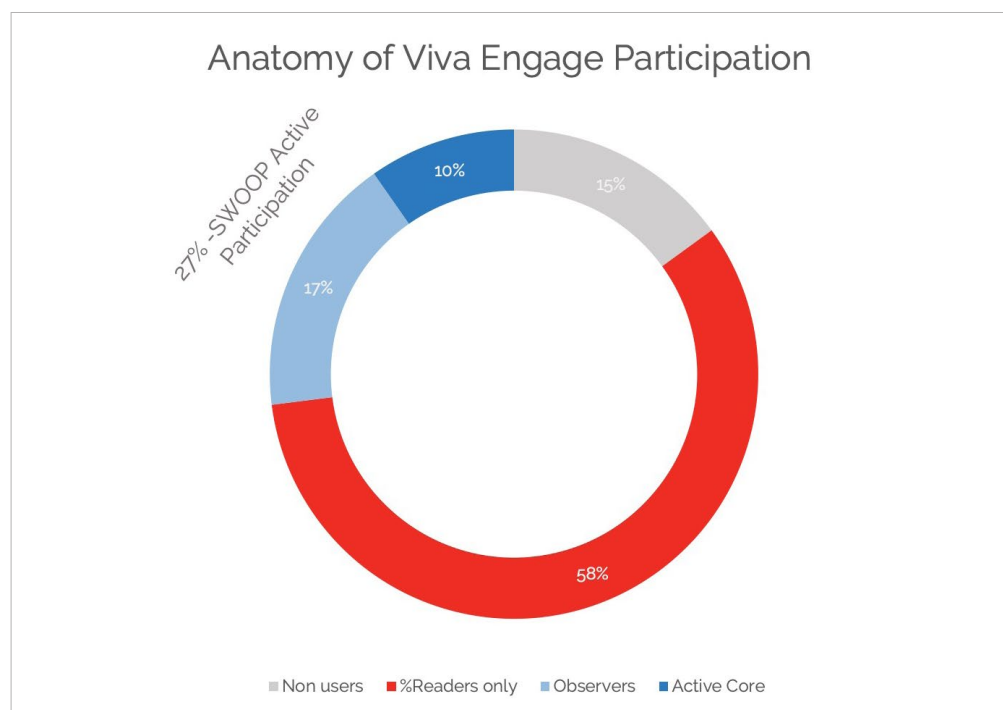
Figure 8 - Anatomy of Viva Engage participation.

In our 2018 report we looked to identify just what a "good" participation rate might be for Viva Engage. Using the principles of the nature of social networks, demonstrating a core of highly interactive members and a larger periphery of less interactive members, we concluded an active core above 30% of the full population is required to be effective. If the core includes a good proportion of highly interactive senior executives, then perhaps the core could be even smaller. Even this reduced rate of active participation appears to be adequate as a minimum.

For 2023 this has stabilized at the 2022 level. This is balanced by a slight increase in the size of organizations participating in our benchmarking, to an average of just under 50,000 employees. Participation rates tend to be lower for larger organizations.

We have set the target level at the 80th percentile, or the top 20%.

Aim for more than 36% interactive users.

How to get better

Here are some ideas to get you started to increase the number of interactive users on your Viva Engage network:

1. Encourage employees to share stories about the impact your organization's products and services are having on customers. Read how motivating this was for employees in a large bank in New Zealand.

2. UNICEF increased growth on Viva Engage by 15 times using a micro-story model to drive engagement and action. Learn how UNICEF did it in this video.

3. Create a Smart Worker community to help people get the most of out of your digital workplace tools. Watch this inspiring story from industrial giant Danfoss.

4. Use Viva Engage to enable employees to showcase their work. Watch how US pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly is positioning Viva Engage to enable employees to tell their stories.

5. Read about developing a strategy and goals for Viva Engage to help you identify areas where Viva Engage can generate the most value.

3.4.2   User engagement

Once we have people on the platform it is time for them to contribute. We use three measures for this; % of Broadcasters, % of Recognition (and Mention Index separated out) and activity per user. These are described in more detail below.

Broadcasters

Now we have managed to influence employees to become active on the platform, we need to try and keep them there. The most common method is to provide content they can only access on the platform. Given ESN platforms are a derivation from consumer social networking sites, there is significant experience available on how to engage people through social media. User engagement around content requires people to react to the content, either by commenting, sharing or simply acknowledging with a reaction. Ineffective content is therefore content that gains little or no traction. We have characterized people who are responsible for this style of content as Broadcasters. In other contexts, broadcasting may not be a negative behavior. But in an ESN it is. We believe this measure should have targets to minimize broadcaster behavior. The average of 5.9% this year is a slight reduction on our 2022 benchmarking rate. The large range points to an opportunity for many organizations to improve.

Average % Broadcaster: **5.9%** **Range 0% – 47%**

Try keeping the % Broadcaster to below 3%.

How to get better

Here are some ideas to get you started to keep your % Broadcaster below 3%:

1. Think about benchmarking employees as part of their performance review so they can be accountable for their persona. It's an opportunity to see how each employee is contributing, collaborating and sharing their knowledge with the rest of the organization. If, for example, a senior leader is identified as an "Broadcaster" by SWOOP Analytics, they can be helped to improve their collaboration. Learn how RealFoundations benchmarks employees to help them improve their collaboration skills.

2. When one of the world's largest agriculture companies held its global leadership conference, leaders were presented with their own SWOOP Analytics persona and compared with their peers. Each leader was ranked in order, with those regularly engaging with their team at the top of the list. Seeing the data of who was best engaging with their staff had a big impact on these leaders. Learn how it worked.

3. When managers are active on Viva Engage, their employees will follow. But what do you do if your leaders aren't using Viva Engage? At Siemens Energy, the solution was to target training for leadership to engage on Viva Engage. Learn what worked and what didn't work.

4. Learn what senior leaders need to do to get large-scale engagement on Viva Engage.

Finding % Broadcasters in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find % split of all the Personas in the Persona Distribution report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Engagement tab.

Persona Distribution

SWOOP Personas shows the split between the four active SWOOP personas, excluding any Observers.

This breakdown is based on a total of 31 active users plus 16 Observers.

Broadcasters 0%

Responders 29%

Catalysts 26%

Engagers 45%
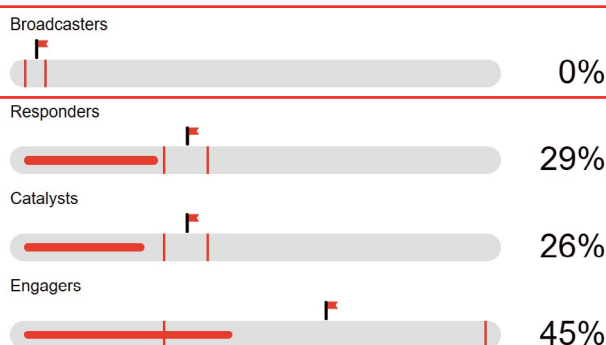
Mention Index

Tagging, or @ mentioning, a colleague is to encourage their participation in the discussion. Mentions almost always extend the conversation. The 2023 score is a 3% improvement on the 2022 score and continues an upward trend from 2020. We think selective tagging is a positive habit.

Average % Mention:

11%

Range 1% – 27%

We suggest a target of 16% mentions.

How to get better

Here are some ideas to get you started to get more people involved in Viva Engage conversations:

1. Learn about the power of @ mentioning people. It leads to 73% more replies.

2. Read how a global consultancy company began @mentioning colleagues in a monthly report posted in Viva Engage, bringing new life to the community.

3. At New Zealand postal service NZ Post, the posts with the most engagement are those that involve celebrating people, whether it be a work anniversary, a birthday, a great photo someone has shared. @mentioning those people brings them into the conversation.

4. Sharing personal stories on Viva Engage has broken down prejudices and created a more inclusive, respectful, safe and diverse workplace at water provider WaterNSW. Part of the key to the success of the Viva Engage campaign is to finish the post by nominating a colleague to share their story, and @mentioning them in the post. It's like passing the baton to ensure the campaign continues with new posts.

5. When a KLM pilot noticed he was carrying a full load of water on a plane only half filled with passengers due to COVID-19 restrictions, he posted on Viva Engage to ask if there was glitch. Sure enough, there was. The correct people were tagged into the post and the situation was addressed immediately, saving the airline money by reducing fuel and helping the environment.

Finding the Mention Index in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the Mention Index report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Engagement tab.

Mention Index

Percentage of posts with @ mention:

55%

Average number of replies for posts that:

Include @	Exclude @	**Did you know...**
2.03	**2.11**	Posts that include an @ mention typically get more replies.

User Activity

A common measure of success for social media systems is the raw activity the platform is attracting. Social systems, however, are characterized by a "long tail" effect, whereby lead users are responsible for a significant proportion of the activity.

A quick measure to identify the extent this is occurring is to measure the 'Activity per User' ratio. The average user activity works out to be just under one activity/week/user. The 2023 best practice (30 activities / active user) performance works out to 1.2 activities/week/user. The performance is a 2% drop from 2022. This is a measure we would like to maximize without limit.

We suggest a practical target for this measure is one or more activities/week for every active user, ideally in the proportion of the 1 post, 2 replies, 3 likes rule.

Average Activity/User: **21**
Range 4 – 84

Finding Activity / User in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the Activity / User in the User Activity report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Activity tab.

User Activity

User Activity measures the average number of activities (posts, replies, or reactions) that active users have done.

● Post ● Reply ● Like
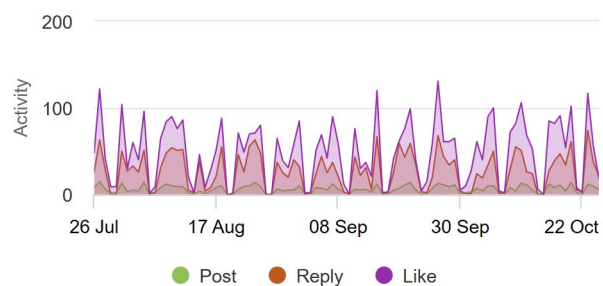
Average activity per active user **222.6**

Average discussion thread per active user **17.4**

When the network is forming, the score should increase. If the score is declining over time then intervention may be needed if you want to keep the network alive.

How to get better

Here are some ideas to get you started to get more people actively engaged in Viva Engage conversations:

1. Get your senior leaders to follow the 1, 2, 3 rule and see the impact it makes.

2. The top 20% of organizations who collaborate successfully online follow the 1,2,3 rule. Listen to this podcast from SWOOP Analytics CEO Cai Kjaer.

3. Follow these five steps to run a thriving community.

4. This multinational bank has used SWOOP Analytics' 1, 2, 3 rule to get leaders started on Viva Engage. Learn how they did it.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT POSTING

The most value comes from **good conversations**.
Follow this ratio as a rule of thumb to get the **balance** right:

For every **1 POST**... ...also make **2 REPLIES** ...and **3 REACTIONS**

SWOOP collaboration analytics — What does this look like for you? Check **SWOOP Analytics** to see how many **posts, replies and reactions** you have made.

3.4.3   Connecting

Connecting signals the evolution from a media focus to a relationship focus. For many adopters of Viva Engage this is a critical transition. While content is used to attract people to Viva Engage, the real value in the platform comes from people connecting with other people. Once connections are made, the pathways have been established for true knowledge sharing, problem solving and innovation.

Proportion of Engagers, Catalysts, Responders and Broadcasters

The SWOOP Analytics Persona scores assess the percentage categorizations for the non-observers i.e. those that are active more than once every two weeks. SWOOP Analytics identifies Personas based on interaction behaviors[4].

---

4   https://www.swoopanalytics.com/personas/

Figure 9 - Behavioral persona distributions.

The Responder has the highest average score. A Responder is someone who reacts to others with replies and likes. We often refer to them as the caregivers who help sustain communities. The pattern has changed little from 2018, with a significant range of scores for each persona. The Engager is our aspirational persona. **Engagers are able to balance posting and responding. This behavior therefore lends itself to relationship-building,** and the movement from engagement around content, to building connections. The proportion of Engagers has dropped to 17.5% from 22% in 2020, continuing a downward trend.

In terms of targets for the positive Personas, the proportion of Engagers should be more than 21%, and Catalysts and Responders should be comfortably between 30–40%. Broadcasters should be avoided completely.

In summary, we identify Observers and Broadcasters as the least attractive personas, in the context of moving an organization beyond content consumption to collaboration. % Observers have been trending upward, but % Broadcasters have been trending down. The positive behavioral personas of Engagers, Catalysts and Responders are required to push organizations into relationship-building; a key prerequisite for effective collaboration. % Catalysts have been stable but % Engagers dropping and % Responders trending upward, a signal that the focus on content is strengthening against the focus on conversations.

Persona Distribution in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the proportion of the Broadcaster, Responder, Catalyst and Engager Personas in the Persona Distribution report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Engagement tab.

Persona Distribution

SWOOP Personas shows the split between the four active SWOOP personas, excluding any Observers.

This breakdown is based on a total of 31 active users plus 16 Observers.

Broadcasters	0%
Responders	29%
Catalysts	26%
Engagers	45%
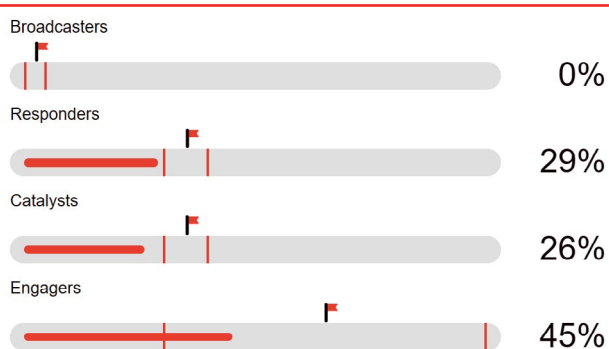
How to get better

Here are some ideas to get more Engagers, Catalysts and Responders across your organization:

1. Take the SWOOP Analytics Persona Quiz to find out your persona, and share the quiz with colleagues on your Viva Engage network.

2. Research from Griffith University, based on SWOOP data, has revealed a direct correlation between student personas and their academic grades, and it turns out that being an Engager is the aim of the game.

3. For Australia's largest member organization, the magic of SWOOP Analytics is the ability to immediately give people insights into their online behaviors at work. The NRMA uses SWOOP Analytics to show leaders and leadership teams how they're tracking and to benchmark their online personas so they can compare and learn from their online interactions and behaviors.

4. Seeing how you work, changes how you work. Try this checklist to help improve your personal collaboration.

5. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor of this university uses the SWOOP Analytics personas to monitor and provide positive feedback to his own leadership team.

Influencer Risk Score

Social media influencers can attract eyeballs to content and therefore advertisers and revenue for content owners. Engaging users around content is the end game for social media. For Enterprise Social Networks it is more like the beginning of the journey. Once an organization starts to prioritize connections and relationships over content, it is the relationship network that becomes the focus. The influencers are the people central to these networks. They are the "go to" people and the people positioned to broker new connections.

> Engaging users around content is the end game for social media. It is more like the beginning of the journey for ESNs, that ends with having valuable conversations.

However, networks can become over-dependent on a single hub. When this is the case, a network can disintegrate, should the hub leave the network. The extent to which a network is at risk of this happening is captured by our **Influencer Risk**. This index calculates the degree to which the network is dependent on a selected few. The higher the score, the higher the risk.

The average score is 34 with a best practice i.e. lowest risk score of 4.6. This is a 2 percentage points increase on 2022 results. **A high Influencer Risk Index means the network is at risk if a few key people were to leave**. Just like hierarchical roles, it is always good to build some redundancy into the network, encouraging multiple hubs to form, and to lower the key influencer risk. On average the Influencer Risk is far too high.

Set an initial target at a maximum of 16% for the Influencer Risk Index.

Influencer Risk: 34

Range 4.6 – 80.3

Influencer Risk in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the Influencer Risk Score at the bottom of the Influential People report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Engagement tab.

Influential People

Influential People are people that many others engage with.

NAME	PEOPLE ENGAGED ▼	FOLLOWERS ⇕
Shirley Blyrizeled	28	0
Frankie Swoopster	25	0
Benjamin Sturst	24	0
Deborah Havian	15	0
Harold Ackat	14	0
Ruth Waxem	11	0
Victoria Blyrizeled	9	0
Noah Emares	9	0
Joyce Cellem	8	0
Marilyn Ispair	8	0

Show more rows

INFLUENCER RISK SCORE

Measures the reliance on a small number of influencers.

14%

How to get better

Here are some ideas to improve your Influencer Risk Score so as not to become too reliant on a small handful of people to keep your Viva Engage communities thriving:

1. Seeing your name on the Most Influential People list can become competitive, bringing some gamification to work. That was the case at this university amongst its librarians.

2. This Chief Financial Officer from a large American health insurer is almost always among the top 10 most influential people on the company's Viva Engage network, and he's often talking about running!

3. Read the story in section 2 from Westpac New Zealand on "How to become an influencer in a month".

4. Learn how the Chairman of the Board of this global publishing company is almost always among the top 10 Most Influential People on its Viva Engage network, which boasts more than 8,000 members.

5. A sign of RealFoundations' digital maturity is the fact the CEO has been able to step back from being the most influential person on the network because using Viva Engage is now part of the company's everyday culture of working out loud.

3.4.4   Sharing

The sharing stage leverages the connections we have built. Connections provide the pathways for knowledge sharing. Knowledge comes in two forms; explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge is just another name for information or content. Most organizations have many ways of sharing information.

While we might argue about which ways work the best, for the most part, explicit knowledge sharing is relatively easy, compared with tacit knowledge sharing. By definition, tacit knowledge is not codified. It is shared through frequent and rich conversations.

The most effective means for sharing tacit knowledge is face-to-face. However, the ESN is available to fill the gaps between important face-to-face knowledge sharing sessions. The richer and more frequent the online conversations are, the more effective face-to-face interactions will be, once the opportunity arises. The requirement for richer online discussions is being amplified as the need to support remote work continues.

For this stage we're applying the measures of Public Messages, Post/Reply ratio, Threads per User and these are outlined below.

Public Messages

A number of benchmarks can be used as indicators of sharing. The Public messages measure identifies the percentage of messages that are open and transparently available across the network, i.e. posted in public communities. While there are always good reasons for maintaining privacy for certain messages, we believe a sharing organization should be continually challenging private spaces.

%Public Messages

79% ↑

Range 9% – 100%
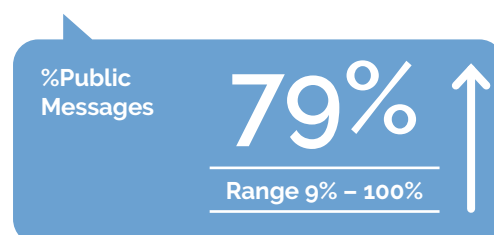
Often setting Viva Engage communities to private is because members don't think anyone else would be interested in the detail of their activities. Largely, this may be true, but by setting these Viva Engage communities as private, it completely removes the opportunity to share.

At 79%, the percentage of public groups is 2 percentage points higher than 2022.

An appropriate target for Public Messages is greater than 97%.

% Public Messages in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the proportion of public messages in the Public/Private Messages report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Content tab.

Public/Private Messages

The proportion of public and private messages.

99%

Public   Private

Distribution of private messages:

Messages in private communities

18%

Direct messages between users

82%
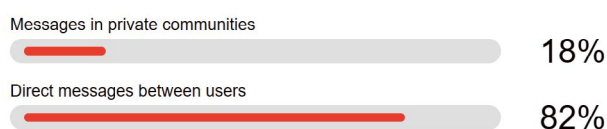
How to get better

Here are some examples of the benefit of keeping Viva Engage communities public:

1. All Viva Engage communities are made "public" at this tertiary educator and yet people are happy to share their personal stories, showing Viva Engage has become a psychologically safe space.

2. A key to Bankwest's success with Viva Engage was its "intent to be open". Keeping communities public ensures Viva Engage is a place where people can talk, ask questions and find the person with the answer.

3. Community managers play an important role in ensuring Viva Engage communities are public, thereby opening conversations to everyone across the enterprise. Read about the importance of having a dedicated person to facilitate Viva Engage.

4. This goal setting article explains the importance of keeping Viva Engage communities public.

Reply/Post ratio

We often refer to the Reply/Post ratio as "pump priming". When networks are starting up, it is common for leaders to post a lot of content to attract people to the network (Reply/Post < 1). At this stage we expect the number of posts to exceed the number of replies during start-up. But as the network matures and becomes more conversation-centric, we would expect the ratio to reverse, with replies outnumbering posts. If this isn't happening, then there is a good chance effective knowledge sharing is not occurring.

Average Reply/Post: **1.96**
Range 0.29 – 5.82

At 1.96 we see, on average, **people are replying about twice as much as posting. This suggests Viva Engage discussions are moving in the right direction.**

A practical target for a Reply/Post ratio should be above 2.5 replies for every post.

Reply/Post ratio in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can calculate the Reply/Post ratio by dividing the number of replies by the number of posts from the Key Statistics report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Activity tab.

Key Statistics

USERS	POSTS	REPLIES	REACTIONS	MENTIONS	NOTIFY/CC
47	560	2422	4380	2292	339

How to get better
Here are some tips to ensure someone replies to posts so conversations don't die:

1. If you want more responses to your posts, try adding an attachment. SWOOP Analytics' research found you get more replies and likes when you attach a photo or a video to a message.

2. The CEO and Deputy CEO of this major bank spent time replying to their employees' Viva Engage posts during the COVID-19 pandemic, taking the time to listen to people and respond to their questions.

3. Posts with lots of replies have the potential to go viral on your Viva Engage network. Learn how you can predict which posts will go viral.

4. Here are five tips to get you collaborating and working smarter today. One is to reply to posts.

5. Find out how the scientific research organization CSIRO boosts engagement on Viva Engage with knowledge sharing. No matter if staff have been at CSIRO for three days or 3,000 days, the 90 Day Club community members can share their thoughts, ideas, resources, lessons learnt and acronym decoders.

Threads per User

This measure is designed to capture the breadth of engagement of employees in discussions. The more discussion threads employees are involved in, the more likely active knowledge sharing is occurring. It is a good indicator of organizations' maturing use of Viva Engage as a platform for discussion and dialogue, and not simply content sharing.

Average Threads/User: 1.44
Range 0.33 – 5.85

At 1.44 this measure is another 14% reduction on 2022, continuing a downward trend in online conversations. This is another measure where there should be no upper limit.

A practical initial target for Threads per User is more than one thread/user every 11 weeks.

How to get better
Here are some examples of how Viva Engage posts have connected colleagues who may otherwise never have crossed paths. Now they've built online relationships that can be used for better business value:

1. Who is the most famous person you've met? This was a question asked on a major US health insurer's Viva Engage network. Asking such a simple question, along with the celebrity selfies, has connected colleagues who otherwise may never have crossed paths.

2. Sharing photos of work sites in some of the world's most isolated regions has formed strong connections between colleagues. Building these online relationships through photos has led to stronger connections which have resulted in problem solving and a boost in morale. Read more in this case study or watch this video.

3. Hear stories directly from the frontline from Australia's largest private health insurer Medibank, Australia's largest member organization NRMA and the world's most geographically dispersed ambulance and first aid service St John WA and learn how Viva Engage is connecting colleagues online.

4. The state of Queensland is seven times the size of Great Britain and two and a half times the size of the US state of Texas. RACQ shopfronts and offices are spread across the state, thousands of kilometers apart. With Viva Engage, the barriers from the geographical divide are broken and people from all across the state are connecting through conversations.

3.4.5   Problem solving

A problem shared is a problem solved. This well-known saying correctly identifies that problems are rarely solved in isolation. But it is also true that a lot of knowledge is shared without an express purpose. For example, gossip is a form of knowledge sharing, but it rarely moves the organization forward, and sometimes quite the contrary.

The transition from knowledge sharing to problem solving is another key transition, just like the one between engaging around content and connecting. Once a problem-solving purpose is acknowledged, we have a path to true value creation. Tim Baker and Aubrey Warren in their book "Conversations at Work: Promoting a Culture of Conversation in the Changing Workplace" identify conversations without questions being simply statements passing back and forth with no result. **"Questions add the vital ingredients of reflection, investigation, and integration"; all of which are required to solve difficult problems**.

For this stage we're applying the Response Rate and Two-way Relationships measures.

Response Rate

The **Response Rate** looks to directly capture responses to posts. For this benchmark we include only replies; some of which may be further questions. A reply can include a written reply, GIF, an image or more. Reactions have been excluded from this benchmark (though are available on the SWOOP Analytics dashboard), because a reaction can be a conversation killer i.e. how do you extend a conversation after a "like"?

> Average 'Reply' Response Rate: **47%**
>
> Range 9% – 74%

The average Response Rate of 47% is the same as the 2022 result.

Set a target of at least 58% Response Rate for this important measure.

Finding Response Rate in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the % of posts with replies in the Response Rate report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Engagement tab.

Response Rate

Response Rate identifies the % of posts that received a response.

Posts with replies	88%
Posts with reactions	97%
Posts with no replies or reactions (show posts)	2%

Replies received:

Less than 1 hour	13%
1 - 24 hours	46%
More than 24 hours	41%
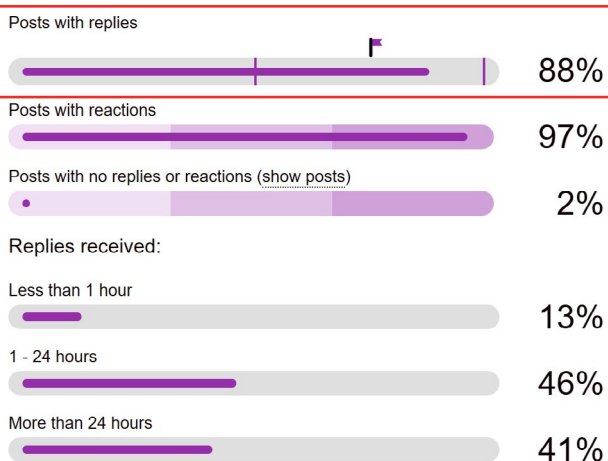
How to get better

Here are some examples of how organizations have successfully boosted Response Rates across their Viva Engage network:

1. Read how this prominent university ran a gratitude campaign on Viva Engage, with posts receiving an 85% response rate for replies.

2. St John WA, whose service spans the largest geographical footprint of any ambulance service in the world, launched Yammer (now Viva Engage) in just seven days. On day one, Yammer was launched with a video. A week later, there were 2,000 interactive users on the platform and Response Rates were at 88 per cent, well above the global average. Learn how St John WA did it.

3. This blog article explains the importance of Response Rates.

4. If you want more responses to your Viva Engage post, try adding an attachment and asking a question.

Two-way Relationships (Reciprocity)

A two-way connection is formed when you initiate an interaction with someone e.g. you react to their post and they, in return have perhaps replied to one of your posts. Two-way connections are seen as a signal of a relationship being formed. Of course, the more two-way interactions you have with someone, the more likely you are to have formed a stronger relationship with them.

> **Average %Reciprocation (Two-way Relationships):** **20.6%**
> Range 10% – 46%

The Two-way Relationship measure is simply the percentage of all relationships that are two-way connections. The 2022 result is a 5% drop from the 2022 result, and continues the downward trend, which is disappointing for this key measure.

Organizations should be trying to maximize the Two-way Relationships measure, looking to achieve a level above 26%.

If you have a group with a high number of two-way connections, it is more than likely the group is densely connected, and therefore more cohesive in its operations. It is common to judge a Viva Engage community by how active it is. But if the activity is simply statements or opinions passing in the night, performance is simply an illusion.

The Two-way Relationship score is the most reliable measure of relationships forming and problems being solved.

> If the activity is simply statements or opinions passing in the night, performance is simply an illusion.

Two-way Relationships in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the % of two-way relationships in the Two-way Relationships report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Collaboration tab.

Two-way Relationships

Two-way Relationships measures how many of the relationships are reciprocated. A high score means strong engagement between people.

63%

How to get better

Here are some examples of how organizations are encouraging two-way relationships across their Viva Engage network:

1. In one of the most isolated cities in the world, there are three employees running a busy car rental branch. Yet, these three workers are some of the best-connected employees in their multi-national company of thousands. They are so well connected because they've built strong relationships on Viva Engage, even though most have never met face to face.

2. By building two-way digital relationships across Viva Engage, even though colleagues are dispersed across thousands of kilometers, this member organization can provide you with hundreds of examples where its employees have used the enterprise social network to solve problems to deliver a better service to its 1.7 million members.

3. "They come to Yammer for the cats and dogs, but they stay for the work." This global publishing company encourages fun and socialization on Viva Engage amongst its 8,000 users. The result of doing so has led to better business value and stronger two-way relationships across the organization.

4. Having a dedicated community facilitator ensures questions in the main communities are answered, and they can bring the right people into conversations by @mentioning them, thereby forming two-way relationships. Read about the importance of having a dedicated person to facilitate your Viva Engage network.

3.4.6   Innovating

While regular problem solving is akin to incremental innovation, we reserve the final stage of maturity for when organizations exhibit a culture of continuous innovation, adaptability and responsiveness. Clayton Christensen introduced us to the concept of disruptive innovation in his book the "The Innovator's Dilemma"[5] some 20 years ago. Disruptive innovation occurs when a diversity of views is brought to bear on a problem or opportunity.

McKinsey, reporting on current topics of board interest, rates "innovation and growth" as by far the most common topic of interest for boards of directors during 2020 and beyond. Perhaps this is not surprising given the history of successful innovations post major global disruptions e.g. dot.com bust of 2001, global financial crisis in 2008. In the Microsoft 365 suite, the Viva Engage platform is the most supporting of radical innovation initiatives. The enterprise reach, diverse communities and community membership, cognitive separation from the short term day-to-day, all combine to place Viva Engage potentially at the center of an enterprise's innovation efforts.

For this stage we're applying the Multi-Group Participation and Curiosity measures.

Multi-Group Participation

A key prerequisite for successful innovation is diversity of thought, which comes from a diversity of connections, leading to a diversity of experiences. Diversity can be measured across a multitude of dimensions. While diversity is often aligned with gender, business enterprises are also concerned about diversity of connections across the formal lines of business, or exposure to a diversity of perspectives and thinking.

> **Average %Diversity:** **44.3**
> Range 1.8 – 68.1

SWOOP Analytics' Multi-Group Participation measure used for this benchmark is diversity of participation in Viva Engage communities. One can build diversity by being active in a larger number of communities.

The Multi-Group Participation measure takes into account the number of communities one is an active member of, and how evenly activity is spread across those communities. Through participation in Viva Engage, people can build their diversity of thought by being active in a larger number of online communities. The enterprise diversity score is simply the average of individual employee's diversity scores.

The average diversity score is marginally higher than 2022.

To maximize a diversity score, someone would need to spread their activities evenly across a large number of Viva Engage communities. Having public communities that span the common interests of the whole organization is another way to encourage diversity building. There is a practical and sensible limit to how much one should aim to do this.

Aim to exceed a target of 53% for Multi-Group Participation.

---

5   https://www.amazon.com/Innovators-Dilemma-Revolutionary-Change-Business/dp/0062060244

While diversity is required to source the breadth of ideas and opportunities available, the conversion of highly prospective ideas into successful implementations requires focused collaboration and cohesive teams. Therefore, **it is the trio of benchmarks of Two-way Relationships, Multi-Group Participation and Curiosity that collectively reflects how innovative an organization is likely to be.**

Multi-Group participation in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the % of multi-group participation in the Multi-Group Participation report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Collaboration tab.

Multi-Group Participation

The *multi-group participation* score indicates how much people participate in multiple communities. Innovation is linked to people who have diverse networks.

The score shown below is the average score of 31 individuals who were active within the selected date range. 17 observers have been excluded from the score calculation.

64%

- 0 - 25%: Mostly active in a single community.
- 25 - 75%: Mostly active in 2-4 communities.
- 75 - 100%: Mostly active in 5 or more communities.

How to get better

Here are some examples of how organizations are successfully connecting employees across different departments and geographies by building connections on Viva Engage:

1. Form communities around core competencies in areas in which you are seeking innovation. Then focus on conversations on exploration and deeper conversations.

2. Something as simple as sharing a photo of indoor plants on Viva Engage has built connections across the ranks of the Victoria Police service, and ultimately led to crime solving. Read this fascinating story or watch this video.

3. A Viva Engage Pride community is among the most engaged at this US health insurer. It brings together people from all departments and from across the entire USA to build connections and support each other.

4. Telling bad Dad Jokes on Viva Engage has connected employees across New Zealand, building online relationships that can result in better business relationships.

5. The single most discussed topic on one of the largest private Viva Engage networks in the Asia Pacific region is same-sex marriage. The topic brings together people from all aspects of the telco to talk about a single topic.

Curiosity Index

This measure simply calculates the proportion of posts and replies that include a question. On its own, a high curiosity might signal a more inquisitive organization; and one willing to entertain change, innovate and/or challenge the status quo. Curiosity and Multi-Group Participation leads to richer discussions and higher levels of creativity. Great ideas, however, are only useful if they can be implemented. Typically, implementation teams will now be located within Microsoft Teams. It is important that opportunities created in Viva Engage are not left there unimplemented.

The curiosity index is marginally lower than 2022.

Set a Curiosity Index goal of more than 18%.

Curiosity Index: **12.6%**
Range 2.1% – 27.5%
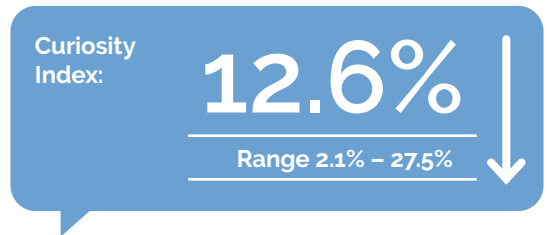
Curiosity in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage**, you can find the percentage of messages with questions in the Curiosity Index report on the Enterprise dashboard, under the Engagement tab.

Curiosity Index

The *Curiosity Index* measures how many messages include a question mark.

Percentage of messages with a question mark:

26%

Average number of replies for messages that:

Include a question **1.12**

Exclude a question **0.57**

Did you know...

Asking questions makes it 4 times more likely you will receive a response.

Asking questions can create stronger engagement and a more open and sharing culture.

How to get better

Here are some examples of how people are asking questions on Viva Engage to solve problems:

1. The CEO of Australia's largest private health insurer asked his employees; "What does quality of life mean to you?" Asking this question on Viva Engage meant the CEO was inviting and encouraging all employees to share their ideas.

2. You can increase employee engagement 10 times by asking the right questions. Watch this video and download our white paper with Oscar Trimboli on "How to ask questions that create connections and impact for leaders".

3. Senior leaders need to think about starting conversations with questions rather than broadcasts, thereby creating psychological safety for people to engage with the senior leaders. It's also important to ask the right questions. Smart executives team up with their internal communications team to help them move on from just delivering a message to starting a conversation. Listen to this podcast to learn more.

4. Can you wear heels while driving in the Australian state of New South Wales? Is it legal to eat while driving? These were some of the questions asked in a state transport department's all company Viva Engage community. This Ask Me Anything post is still the top performing post across the network, loaded with questions.

5. KLM Airlines had a Viva Engage community established purely for cabin crew to ask questions about setting up a new single sign-on system. Turns out it was the top performing community across the airline because people were asking questions and receiving answers.

6. Viva Engage is the living, digital brain of consultancy company Chaucer. If a problem needs to be solved, ask on Viva Engage. It's the place where you tap into the knowledge of the entire company. Questions will be answered, problems will be solved and ultimately it leads to a better service for clients.

7. Here's a list of 20 questions that could change your company.

8. Asking a question on Viva Engage generates, on average, 150% more replies than a non-question post.

3.4.7   Summary

Of the 15 measures directly comparable with 2022, nine measures retreated. The drop in people-to-people engagement measures of Threads per User, Two-way Relationships, % Engagers and Activity per User is troubling. The big improver was a further increase in the Mention Index.

The following table collates our recommendations for enterprise goalsetting and has been largely set at the 80th percentile (top 20%) of our 97 benchmarked organizations for 2023.

Table 2 - SWOOP Analytics-recommended enterprise targets.

SWOOP Benchmark	Recommended Enterprise Targets
Platform Adoption	
% Interactive Users	Active participation rate of more than 36%
User Engagement (around content)	
% Interactive Users	More than 36% interactive users.
% Broadcasters*	Less than 3% Broadcasters
User Activity	1 post, 2 replies, 3 likes portfolio of more than 1 interactions/week for each user
Connecting	
% Engagers **% Catalysts** **% Responders**	% Engagers above 21%. % Catalyst and % Responder should be comfortably between 30–40%
Influencer Risk Score	Less than 16
Sharing	
% Public Messages	Greater than 97%
% Mention	Greater than 16%
Replies per Post	Greater than 2.5 replies for every post
Threads Per User	1 thread/user every 11 weeks
Solving	
% Response Rate	Greater than 58%
% Two-Way Relationships	Greater than 26%
Innovating	
Multi-Group Participation (Diversity)	Greater than 53
Curiosity Index	Greater than 18%
* Lower is better	

4   Community benchmarking

Just as teams on Microsoft Teams are not all the same, communities on Viva Engage are not all the same. To better understand how you can manage your Viva Engage community, you must first appreciate the type of community you are participating in.

Viva Engage communities are not all real "communities" in the true sense of the word. SWOOP Analytics uses interaction data and machine learning algorithms in our benchmarking to suggest what type of community you are a part of. This feature is not yet available on the SWOOP Analytics dashboards. Some communities may find a disconnect between their community's intent and the SWOOP classification. This should signal a need for reflection on whether the community's purpose is really being achieved. Where the purpose and SWOOP classification match, then community leaders can look to the benchmark goals to guide their development.

Applying our machine learning approach to 2023 Viva Engage community data provided the following community types (read further below for a definition of the community types):

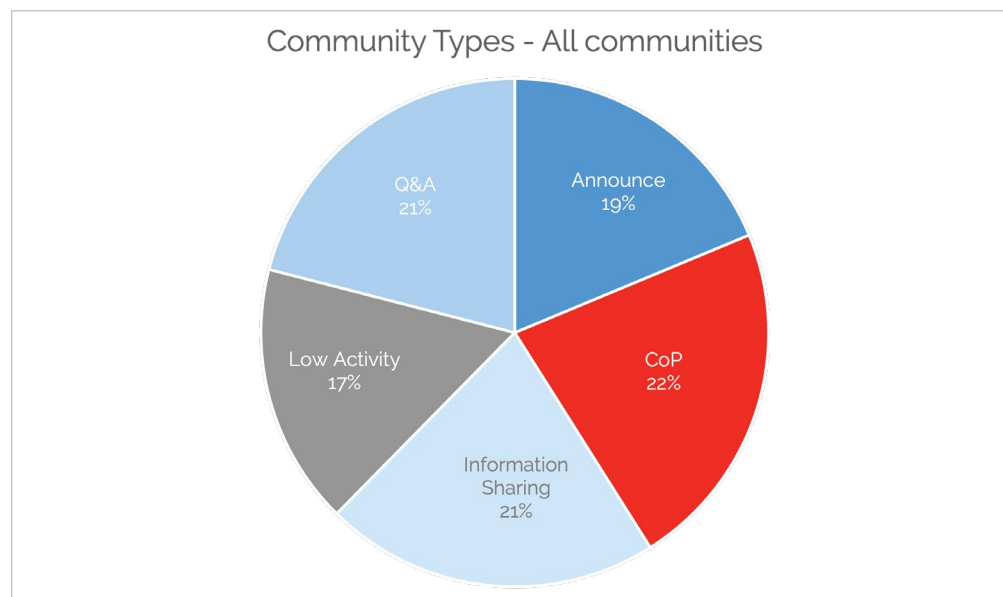*Figure 10 - Machine learning classification of Viva Engage community types.*

Our experience is that many Viva Engage communities are formed without a defined expectation of the type of community they want to be. The machine learning algorithms use 12 SWOOP Analytics indicators to cluster the data into distinguishable groupings. We then look at the characteristics of the groups to apply the label to them. These classifications are

simply statistical approximations. But it does provide a starting point to identifying more customized targets for each community type.

Comparing the percentage classifications with 2022 results, the "Low Engagement" has dropped from 25% to 17%, "Announce" groups have grown from 15% to 19%. The other types were similar to proportions we published in our 2022 report.

Table 3 – Viva Engage community types and characteristics.

Community Type	General Description	SWOOP Indicator Characteristics (from machine learning)
Community of Practice	Is focused on building skills and competencies by gathering together people with acknowledged levels of practical expertise.	Modest membership size. High levels of Two-way Relationships, Interactive Users and Responders. Low Curiosity Index.
Information Sharing (Community of Interest)	Gathers people with common interests with a view to sharing information, more so than actively collaborating.	Large size. Moderate levels of responders, Response Rate and replies per post. Low levels of Two-way Relationships, Multi-group Participation and level of Engagers.
Q&A Forums	Main purpose is to facilitate questions being posed and answers provided.	Modest size. High Curiosity Index, high level of Engagers and Mention Index. Modest diversity. Low levels of Interactive Users and Catalysts.
Announce Groups	Generally top-down information communications.	Very strong level of Catalysts (announcers) and high Response Rate; Low levels of Engagers, Responders and Two-way relationships.
Low Engagement	Likely dormant or 'dead' communities.	Modest levels of Catalysts, but low for virtually every other indicator.

To establish realistic targets for each community type, we select those measures that are seen as a core to the given community's classification; and set the target at the 80th percentile (top 20%) for the given measure. From 2022 we have extended our measures for Viva Engage community performance to include elements associated with a thriving community. See further below to find the exact metrics for each type of community.

4.4   Thriving communities?

For our 2020 Viva Engage benchmarking of communities, we undertook a major overhaul of our methods for assessing successful Viva Engage communities. We used machine learning techniques to identify the most distinguishing features for our SWOOP Analytics community measures. We combined this with judgments sought from industry experts to create a weighted formula to be used in our assessments. The following table identifies the major factors and underlying measures used in the assessment:

Table 4 – SWOOP Analytics feature identification.

Feature	SWOOP Measures[6]
Participation	% Interactive Users Influencer Risk Score % Responders
Engagement	% Engagers % Two-way Relationships
Responsiveness	# Interactive users Replies per Post % Response Rate
Innovation	% Catalysts Curiosity Index Multi-group Participation Mention Index

In our 2021 Viva Engage benchmarking study we included a section on "Happiest Communities" where we used sentiment analysis as the indicator. What we found was that relying on positive sentiment is limiting. For example, we found some perfectly happy communities working in areas where the context was negative e.g. cyber security. We therefore chose to identify the "energy" (both positive and negative sentiment) in communities. This measure also deserves a place in the employee thriving measure.

In 2022 we created new criteria that reflects if a community is "thriving". Referring to Microsoft's Klinghoffer and McCune's article where they close with; *"As we enter the hybrid work era, we're excited to keep studying the numbers even more deeply to understand how thriving can be unlocked across different work locations, professions, and ways of working".* We think we can help with that. Our initial exposure to thriving employees were as members of the high performing "self-directed teams" we identified and celebrated in our 2021 Microsoft Teams Benchmarking Report. Our partner, Hargraves Institute, has since developed a whole education and coaching program called "Resilience for Thriving Teams".

---

6   See Table 4 - SWOOP Analytics Metrics.

Another dimension we would associate with "thriving" is "growth". We say our vegetable garden is thriving when the produce is overflowing. Measuring growth in activity and membership of Viva Engage communities is therefore a measure that has a place. We need to be mindful though that for communities there can be a point where too much growth can create a loss of focus, leading to lower engagement and energy.

Our framework for measuring thriving communities is now:
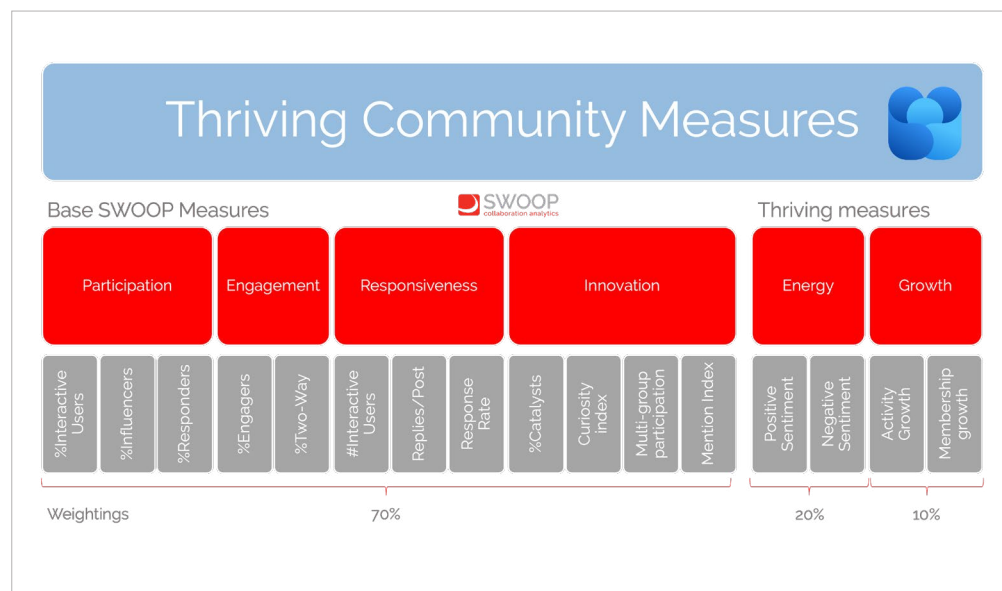
Figure 11 - Measurement framework for Thriving Viva Engage communities.

The Participation, Engagement, Responsiveness and Innovation factors are weighted according to our expert community managers' judgments. We have added the "Energy" and "Growth" factors and given them a collective 30% weighting to emphasize the extension of thinking beyond a "high performing" community to a "thriving" community.

4.5   Identifying elite communities

In 2022 we "overweighted" the thriving factors to achieve a real focus on this type of community. In 2023, we have adjusted the weighting of these measures down to reflect a more balanced treatment between the new "thriving" measures and our existing performance measures for groups.

Somewhat surprisingly, it was the consistency of activity that became the biggest hurdle to achieving elite status. We specified that a high performing thriving community should have, on average, some activity on at least five of every seven days i.e. no more than two "no activity" days per week, over a six-month period. This does not appear an overly onerous condition, but only around 10% of our communities were able to meet this condition.

What types of communities are classified as "high performing"?

The community classifications for the identified "elite" communities:
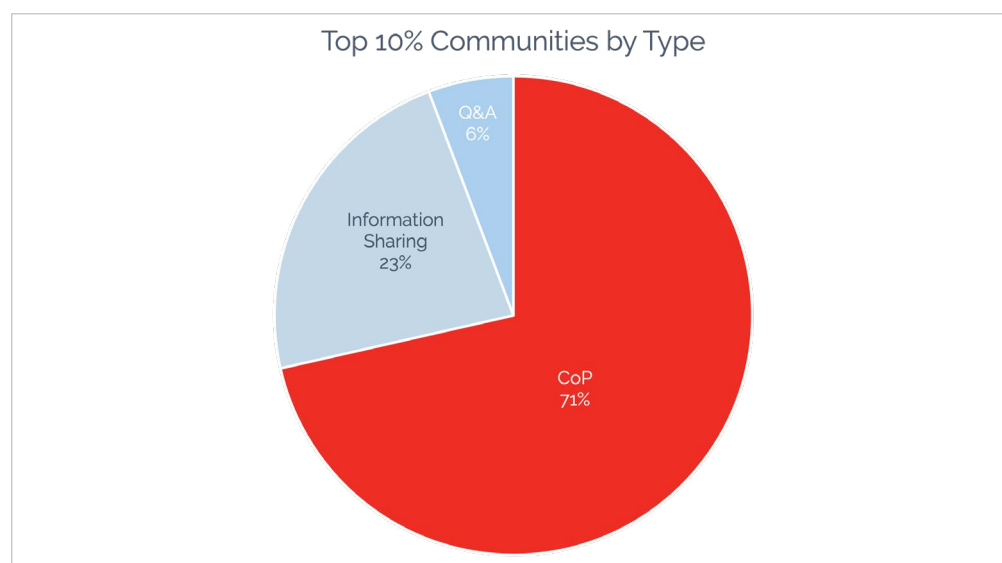
Figure 12 - Community types for elite top performing communities.

It's comforting to see the high performing thriving communities are Communities of Practice and Information Sharing communities which are characterized by stronger interactions between the members. These communities constituted 94% of the top performing communities, compared with 46% in 2022, when we overweighted the thriving measures.

Predictably none of the "low activity" or "Announce" communities found their way into the elite list.

> The high performing thriving communities are the higher connections communities of Communities of Practice and Information Sharing communities.

To identify more qualitative insights from this list, we have reached out to a selection of the top performing thriving communities to share their stories. We hope you can see from these stories that these Viva Engage communities are indeed "thriving and performing", adding tangible business value to their respective organizations. You can read these stories in Section 2 of this report.

In the following sections we identify suggested targets for the different types of communities. In the absence of accepted industry best practices, we again use the top 20% threshold to identify a target that is both aspirational and demonstrably achievable.

4.6   Community of Practice

Viva Engage Communities of Practice (CoPs) are designed to bring together those with common skillsets and experiences, with the objective of deepening competency and capability levels. Our machine learning classification algorithms classify a community as a CoP when the community possesses a core of well-connected members with a larger "gallery" of less connected members. For a CoP, the connected core represents your discipline experts; the gallery is made up of those looking to learn from and eventually join this expert core.

As an example, if your organization is a project-based consulting firm, then project management is going to be one of the core competencies you would want to strengthen and grow. By bringing together your most experienced project managers into a Project Management CoP, you are not only providing a place to strengthen even further a critical core competency, but providing a social learning platform for developing project managers to learn from both the experts and each other. If you are a retail bank or a food retail chain, no doubt a core competency required would be around just how to set up and run a store or similar.

There is a rich literature available on CoPs. We suggest the Community Manifesto by community evangelist Stan Garfield as a good reference for those looking to understand the key success factors. A short introduction to Communities of Practice can also be found on the SWOOP Analytics blog.

A key HBR article written by C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel on core competencies define them as being:
- Rare
- Challenging for competitors to imitate
- Offer superior value to customers.

More simply, what core capabilities do you think your organization brings to customers? This article from HR firm Indeed provides some hints and examples with a simple six-step process for identifying what core competencies you should define.
1. Revisit your company's mission statement.
2. Brainstorm why your company is important to customers.
3. Consider your current competencies.
4. Compare each competency against the three criteria for core competencies.
5. Write down the core competencies you come up with for your company.
6. Identify areas that may need to be outsourced to allow you to better focus on your core competencies.

We recommend trying this process yourself with some of your colleagues.

Core competencies cannot be built through doing online courses. They evolve through the constant interactions of specialist or expert employees. Through coaching and consulting with a broader suite of developing employees, they

> A Viva Engage CoP is an ideal platform for facilitating the growth of a core competency, with its focus on social learning.

will look to the point that a critical mass of expertise has been assembled, and warrant being identified as a core competency. A Viva Engage CoP is an ideal platform for facilitating the growth of a core competency, with its focus on social learning. Do you have Viva Engage CoPs aligned to what you have identified as an emerging or even aspirational core competency? We suggest organizations identify four to five core competency-aligned Viva Engage communities to mark as "official". Look to have them sponsored and formally led by discipline leaders. This type of activity will therefore embed Viva Engage and these communities at the core of the organization's strategy and mission.

Something that distinguishes a CoP from an information sharing, or Community of Interest, is that CoPs develop actions or projects that produce a tangible product i.e. a documented best practice, training course design, supplier vetting process etc.. Often the requirement for the deliverable is extensive enough to justify a formal project and resources to complete. For example, selected members of the official CoP may be conscripted into a working team hosted by Microsoft Teams, but linked to the CoP.

4.6.1 Community of Practice performance targets

Below we have selected some specific SWOOP Analytics measures aligned with CoP performance from our benchmarking data. Typically, the target is set at the top 20% level, making it aspirational, but demonstrably achievable:

Table 6 - Suggested SWOOP Analytics targets for CoPs.

Characteristic SWOOP Analytics Measure	Recommended Target (Top 20% Level)
% Two-way Relationships	23%
% Interactive Users	42%
% Influencer Risk Score	< 20%
% Engagers	11%
% Responders	33%
% Response Rate	62%
Replies per Post	2.3
# Interactive Users	168

High levels of two-way relationships are the cornerstone of high performing CoPs. High levels of interactive users suggest employees are generally interested in them. CoPs should not rely on a single, or a small number of, leaders, but spread responsibilities across the community (lower influencer risk score). High performing CoPs should expect a good response rate to postings and good levels of engagement in the ensuing conversations.

The best size of a CoP according to the Stan Garfield manifesto is more than 100 and optimally around 200 members. The 80th percentile for an active community size this year is at just under 168, sitting comfortably within the advice range.

While much of the current buzz is around employee engagement and connections of a social media/networking style, we cannot emphasize enough <u>the stronger and deeper connections provided by high functioning CoPs are the core business value generators for Viva Engage.</u>

4.7   Q&A Forums targets

Unlike CoPs, Q&A Forums are more open for membership and focused on problem solving and innovation. The defining characteristic of Q&A Forums is curiosity i.e. a large number of posts framed as questions. This is followed by higher levels of Engagers, Response Rate and Mention Index. The percentage of Interactive Users tend to be at the lower end, suggesting not everyone on Viva Engage is interested in these types of communities. Their size, however, tends to be larger than for CoPs.

Table 7 - Q&A Forum recommended targets.

Characteristic SWOOP Measure	Recommended Target (Top 20% Level)
Curiosity Index	17%
% Engagers	16%
Replies per Post	4.6
Mention Index	9%
Multi-group Participation	59%
# Interactive Users	1,350 (but really as large as you can get)

The above suggests about 17% of all posts on a Q&A Forum should be questions that should receive, on average, more than four replies. A diverse membership - members who are active across multiple communities - helps ensure more informed replies (and questions, for that matter). The use of @ mentions to tag experts into a Q&A session, along with some level of engaged discussion, are also healthy attributes of a high performing Q&A Forum. The targets for 2023 are lower than 2022, though with a larger average number of interactive users.

Q&A Forums provide quick business value. Have a common technical problem to solve, but little time to research the problem yourself? Look to post it on a Q&A Forum. You may find someone has already posted your question and an answer already exists. Otherwise, you may get an answer from a colleague in a fraction of the time it might take to pursue it through formal channels.

Public Q&A forums have been around for longer than the internet has existed. Who hasn't searched online for a problem you are having to find a quick answer? Be aware though that Q&A Forums work better when the membership is large. For Viva Engage Q&A Forums, we recommend leaders monitor unanswered questions using the SWOOP Analytics dashboard. Even if you don't know the answer, respond by @ mentioning others who might.

4.8 Communities of Interest (information sharing communities) targets

Information sharing communities, or Communities of Interest, are typical of the groups found on social networking sites. The main objective is to broadly share information, without an expectation of deep engagement amongst members, or specific problem solving or innovation.

The strongest characteristic is the large number of interactive users, followed by the % Response rate, Replies per Post and % Responders, along with good level of % Catalysts. The strongest "anti-characteristics" are the engagement measures of % Two-way Relationships, % Engagers, Mention Index and Multi-group Participation.

Table 8 - Recommended targets for information-sharing communities.

Characteristic SWOOP Measure	Recommended Target (Top 20% Level)
# Interactive Users	336 (the more the merrier though)
% Response Rate (replies and reactions)	100%
Replies per Post	3.3
% Responders	64%
% Catalysts	44%

These communities generally want to build as big a community as possible, driven by influencers (Catalysts) and attracting high levels of response (though typically this usually includes a high proportion of reactions/likes).

High performing information sharing communities should have relatively large audiences who react/respond to information shared. Catalysts are required to drive participation. Responders are required to keep people participating. Information Sharing communities play an important "inclusiveness" role. You may find some of your most thriving information sharing communities are on non-work topics.

The role of thriving non-work-related communities; many mission-driven e.g. same-sex marriage, Black Lives Matter and climate change, were well documented with case studies in our previous two Viva Engage benchmarking reports. It is important, though, to be mindful of sustaining an appropriate balance of work-related and non-work-related information-sharing communities.

Here are a few examples:

- A Viva Engage community celebrating Pride has become a place of connection and support at this major US health insurer, breaking down geographical, departmental and even team barriers across the company's almost 100,000 employees.

- Employees at this tertiary education institution have been able to safely identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community to all their colleagues, share their personal stories and feel supported, making Viva Engage a psychologically safe space.

- Something as simple as sharing a photo of indoor plants on Yammer has built connections across the ranks of the Victoria Police service, and ultimately led to crime solving.

- The single most discussed topic on one of the largest private Viva Engage networks in the Asia Pacific region is same-sex marriage.

.

4.9 Announce communities targets

Announce communities are simply vehicles for sharing, usually top-down announcements. Viva Engage functions make it attractive for making announcements across the organization. For example, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, a popular use of Viva Engage was to announce emerging policy decisions regarding work-from-home procedures. The data, however, suggests a broader application than this.

The Announce community has only one distinguishing characteristic, and that is an extremely high proportion of Catalysts. Catalysts are individuals who gain outsized reactions to their posts. They are often compared with a so-called 'influencer'. In the enterprise context, a key Catalyst might be a senior executive or the corporate communications function, but the high percentage of Catalysts suggests there are many "announcers". An effective Catalyst should be able to build the size of the community. There is little expectation for Two-way interactions, % Responders or Activity per person.

Announce groups did not rate in our 2023 high performing thriving communities analysis.

Characteristic SWOOP Analytics Measure	Recommended Target (Top 20% Level)
% Catalysts	100%
# Interactive Users	168
% Interactive Users	42%

We typically think of Announce communities as large forums for executives to make announcements. The number of interactive users reflects reactions to the announcements. We anticipate that as Viva Engage evolves, there will be significant support for announcements by senior executives.

4.10 Low Responsiveness communities targets

The 'low responsiveness' category captures those communities that have been active enough to generate a classification, but largely ineffective in any real way. They will require active interventions to become productive in any capacity.

The most distinguishing characteristics of this class of community are the "anti-patterns". Low number of interactive users, low responsiveness, low levels of innovation, low reciprocity – all suggest these communities have been launched but not really moved to a productive level.

4.11 Viva Engage Storyline and Stories

Storyline and Stories were introduced into Viva Engage during 2022. Drawing inspiration from social media platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn, the intent is to provide the opportunity for people to build a personal profiles within Viva Engage, beyond their participation in Communities.

We analyzed the use of Storyline from 37 organizations who had enabled Storyline. Overall, the uptake has been modest, with Storyline posts comprising, on average, 4.5% of all posts. On average, 11% of people have made a Storyline post over the six-month period analyzed. The highest adoption saw 14% of posts being Storyline posts and 23% of employees making a Storyline post.
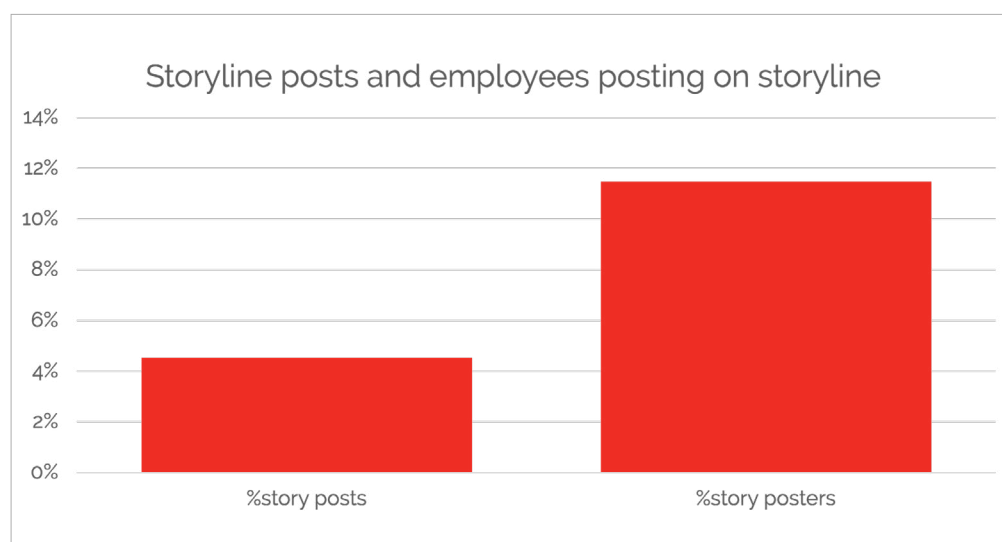

Figure 13 - Viva Engage Storyline adoption.

How well did Storyline posts perform?

We compared reactions, replies and seen by performance for Storyline and non-Storyline posts:
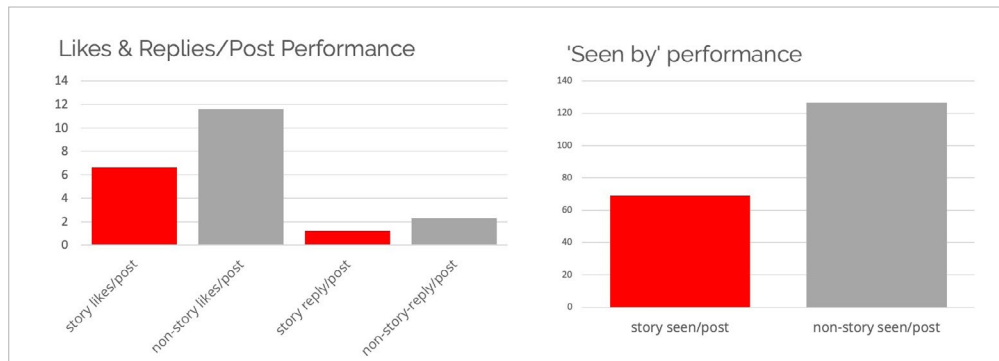

Figure 14 - Storyline vs non-Storyline performance.

The results show that Storyline posts, on average, do not receive the same engagement as non-Storyline posts.

We did publish our predictions about this exact outcome in 2022, which have now been confirmed, that only employees who have a large following can realistically expect their content to appear in other people's feeds, which means that storylines are most likely to be adopted more broadly by senior leaders. Focusing on senior leaders was exactly the approach electricity and gas company National Grid adopted for leader updates that didn't necessarily fit into a specific community.

US pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly also explained at the SWOOP Analytics' 2022 Viva Engage Festival how it positions storylines as a way for employees to "tell their story".

Filtering on Storylines in SWOOP

Within **SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage** you can filter the reports based on the type of message in the Enterprise dashboard. At the top of the dashboard, next to the date selector you will see the Select Message Type drop down that allows you to select which type of messages are being reported on. Simply select All Storyline to see how Storyline posts are performing at your organization.
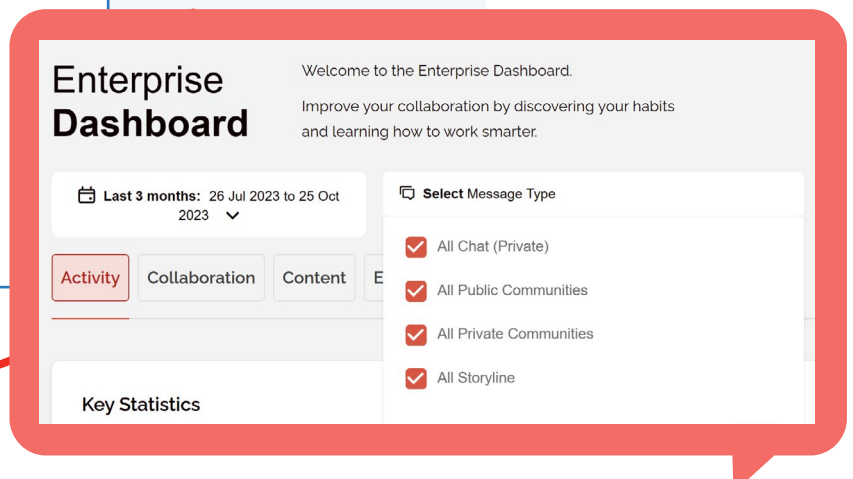
5   Futures – Where to from here for Viva Engage?

5.1   Viva Engage is evolving

With the exception of Storylines, the growth in new functionality in Viva Engage is coming from premium features like **Leadership Corner, Answers in Viva, Advanced storylines and Community campaigns**. These premium features promise stronger connections between employees and organizational leaders (Leadership Corner, Advanced storylines); Experts (Answers in Viva) and key topic tracking.

Historically an organization's knowledge management (KM) function was the natural owner of communities; a place to share knowledge across the enterprise. Nowadays the KM function has been diminished and internal communications (IC) has evolved as the natural "owner" of Viva Engage.

There is a sense that true "communities" are being diluted by a breadth of other enterprise functions like announce groups, Q&A forums, campaigns and events, equally relevant to the IC function. Is this dilution of true communities e.g. communities of practice harmful? Or are communities being "right-sized" amongst other cross enterprise group functions that are providing a broader spectrum of business outcomes?

Our section on Viva Engage community classification (Figure 10) identified the current mix of uses of Viva Engage communities[7]. If we exclude the "low activity" communities, each other classification provides a unique value proposition. Our performance algorithms preference those Viva Engage communities that demonstrate more intense people-to-people connections facilitated through online conversations (Figure 12), but your particular business context may see Q&A Forums or Announce groups adding the most value. It therefore becomes a case of portfolio management. It comes down to the most appropriate mix of Viva Engage communities usage that best suits your business context. However, in the absence of a specific business use case, we would still maintain that dense online conversations are the best way to employee engagement and tangible business outcomes.

---

7   Our AI-based Viva Engage community classification function is not yet available in the SWOOP Analytics for Viva Engage product.

5.2 A way forward

With 70%+ of employees not participating in effective online discussions in Viva Engage communities, there is a mountain to climb which will require more strongly-enforced practices. Collaborative practices need unified adoption to work. Even a small proportion of non-conformance is enough to undermine the whole collective effort.

We know what these practices need to be. We have seen digital leaders and communities practicing them effectively over a decade of benchmarking ESN performances. We now need to accelerate their adoption if the true promise of Viva Engage is to be realised into the future.

Here is a starting point:

1. Establish **"official" communities** in support of organizational core competencies and strategic initiatives e.g. customer service, project management, health and safety, field services, diversity and inclusion, sustainability etc. Also establish "official" communities for each business area.

2. Provide each of the official communities with a person or persons whose role is to facilitate the community, whether it be part or fulltime, depending on the size of the community. These people should be assessed on the community's performance.

3. Ensure each Viva Engage community starts with a "community charter" with, as a minimum, agreements on purpose, expectations on response times and an indication of whether synchronous face-to-face opportunities exist for the members.

4. Organizational leaders must "sponsor" at least one Viva Engage community; preferably an "official" one. They will commit to being active and visible in the community by posting/replying/reacting at least once a week.

5. Ensure everyone who is a part of a formal business division is invited to be a member of that division's official Viva Engage community and encourage everyone to participate.

6. Every employee enrolled as a community member should be provided with the opportunity to be formally trained in using Viva Engage.

7. Ensure your organization's formal recognition system acknowledges employees for establishing successful Viva Engage communities.

8. Consider including employees' online behaviors in performance reviews and look to formally recognize employees who achieve "influencer" status on the SWOOP Analytics platform.

9. All communication that would have been emailed to employees should be posted in the relevant official communities. The announcement feature should be used to trigger email notifications.

6   Join SWOOP's 2024/25 Viva Engage Benchmarking Study

After reading this report, we're sure you'd love to know how your Viva Engage network compares with other organizations. Are you among the best in the world? Or are you struggling to get leaders and employees collaborating?

Join next year's Viva Engage benchmarking to see exactly how your Viva Engage network compares with the rest of the world. SWOOP benchmarking is free and your data remains anonymous.

If your Viva Engage network is among the best, you will receive a SWOOP Award for Outstanding Collaborative Performance and be offered the opportunity to be mentioned in the report and share your learnings. You can also opt-in to receive a custom report authored by SWOOP's Chief Scientist Dr Laurence Lock Lee. This custom report compares the results of your Viva Engage network with all other participating organizations. This will include a comparison of your Viva Engage network against 15 different metrics and show how you scored against the average, and the best, performing organizations. We will also compare your collaborative network performance against others, and Dr Lock Lee will provide a qualitative summary of your organization's strengths and areas for improvement.

Your data is 100% confidential
SWOOP does not store any message content, names or email addresses. Your company name is kept confidential (unless you agree to be named a top performer) and your participation is not disclosed. If your Viva Engage network is among the best in the world we will ask your permission to mention you and offer you the opportunity to have a case study written, which will then be included in the benchmarking report. In your custom report (provided only to you) we will show how you compare with others but you will not be able to see who these other organizations are.

Who can participate?
You must have a minimum 100 employees on Viva Engage and your Viva Engage network must have been active for more than six months. There is no limit to the upper number of colleagues on your Viva Engage network.

Want to find out more?
You'll find all the details to participate in SWOOP's 2024/25 Viva Engage Benchmarking Report on this page. Our Customer Success team will be in touch to walk you through all the details. We're looking forward to you being a part of SWOOP's next Viva Engage Benchmarking Report!

We also conduct benchmarking for Microsoft 365, Microsoft Teams and SharePoint intranet and we can do custom benchmarking for Workplace from Meta.

7   Join the Viva Engage Festival on December 6, 2023.
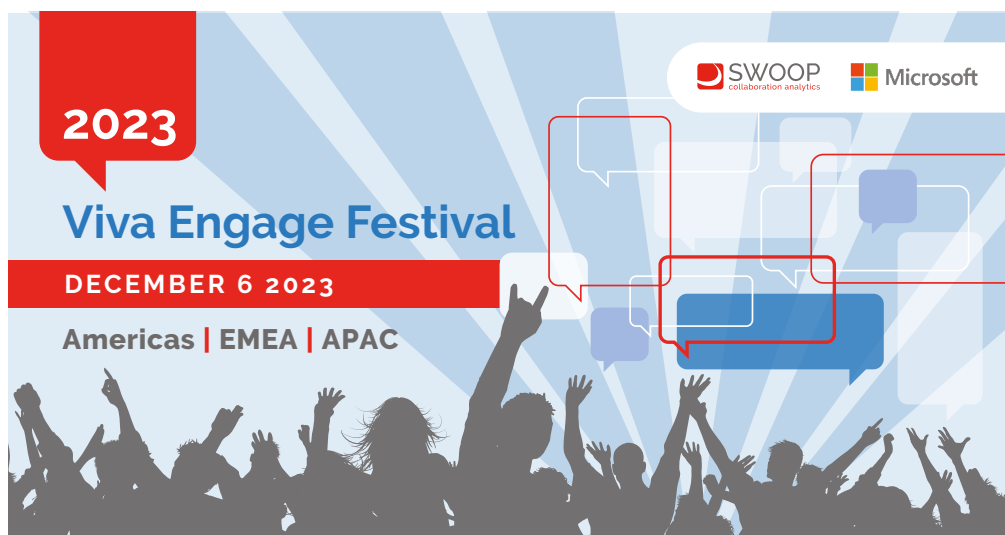
Book your online seat for the third annual Viva Engage Festival on Wednesday, December 6, 2023.

You'll hear from some of the world's best Viva Engage community managers from organizations including multinational telecommunications and media conglomerate **Comcast**, Australian state government department **Transport for NSW**, pharmaceutical giant **Johnson & Johnson**, New Zealand postal service **NZ Post**, Australia's largest insurer **IAG**, multinational bank **ANZ** and Danish sustainable energy company **Vestas**.

We'll announce the 2023 Viva Engage Community Champion for each region, you'll be briefed on the key insights from this report and you'll receive the latest intel about Viva Engage direct from Microsoft.

You're sure to leave the 2023 Viva Engage Festival feeling inspired and armed with loads of insights and tips to boost your own Viva Engage network.

Register for the Viva Engage Festival now or **watch the recordings**.

Bibliography

Webinar: Viva Engage vs Yammer: What's the difference
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glMO6ERYljc

ESN maturity framework
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/blog/esn-maturity-framework?rq=ESN%20Maturity

SWOOP personas
https://support.swoopanalytics.com/hc/en-us/articles/115002988211-Introducing-the-SWOOP-Personas

SWOOP Support Site
https://support.swoopanalytics.com/hc/en-us/articles/115002988211-Introducing-the-SWOOP-Personas

SWOOP Persona Quiz
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/persona-quiz

SWOOP Ebooks
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/resources

2018 Yammer Benchmarking Report
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/download-yammer-benchmarking-2018

The postpandemic board agenda: Redefining corporate resilience
https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-postpandemic-board-agenda-redefining-corporate-resilience

Why Microsoft Measures Employee Thriving, Not Engagement
https://hbr.org/2022/06/why-microsoft-measures-employee-thriving-not-engagement

2021 Microsoft Teams Benchmarking Report
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/teams-bm-2021

Resilience for Thriving Teams
Nurturing resilient individuals and teams
https://www.hargraves.com.au/resilience-for-thriving-teams-kit/

Communities Manifesto: 10 Principles for Successful Communities
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140630211036-2500783-communities-manifesto-10-principles-for-successful-communities/

Building Online Communities of Practice
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/blog/building-communities?rq=communities%20of%20practice

The Core Competence of the Corporation
https://hbr.org/1990/05/the-core-competence-of-the-corporation

Core Competencies: What They Are and How to Identify Them
https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/identifying-core-competencies

Storyline in Viva Engage
https://support.microsoft.com/en-au/topic/storyline-in-viva-engage-cba3c38e-77c6-4ee6-9d5d-6c20522b1fa0

Where Work Gets Done
A new loop analogy for modern work
https://regarding365.com/where-work-gets-done-8d1d653ef48d

"Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age"
https://www.amazon.com/Reclaiming-Conversation-Power-Talk-Digital-ebook/dp/B00SI0B6PC?ref_=ast_author_dp

Video: How to Stop Worrying! Learn to Love Hybrid Working
https://www.swoopanalytics.com/hybridhabits

Why CEOs Want Employees Back in the Office
https://www.shrm.org/executive/resources/articles/pages/why-ceos-want-employees-back-in-office.aspx

Why a Forced Return to Office is Leading to Worker Power
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-forced-return-office-leading-workerpower-dr-gleb-tsipursky/

"Expert Systems".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expert_system

"Total Quality Management (TQM)".
https://asq.org/quality-resources/total-quality-management

Six Sigma
https://asq.org/quality-resources/six-sigma

Lean Manufacturing
https://asq.org/quality-resources/lean

Official Viva Engage Communities
https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/viva-engage-blog/official-communities-are-now-available-in-yammer/ba-p/2797033#:~:text=In%20the%20community%2C%20click%20on,next%20to%20the%20community's%20name.

Viva Engage Premium Features
https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-viva/engage

About the Authors

Dr. Laurence Lock Lee is the Co-founder and Chief Scientist at SWOOP Analytics.

He is an experienced professional, with over 40 years' experience as a researcher, technology leader, educator and management consultant. Dr Lock Lee is one of the world's leading practitioners in Social Network Analysis for organizational change, having conducted more than 100 consulting assignments for clients around the world. He holds a PhD on corporate social capital from the University of Sydney. In the 1980s, at BHP Research, he led the largest private sector Artificial Intelligence laboratory in Australia. He also previously led the national Knowledge Management consulting practices at BHP Information Technology (BHPIT) and at Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC). Dr Lock Lee has published two books and numerous journal and industry articles. He is a regular contributor to Reworked, CMSWire and blogs at SWOOP Blog.

Sharon Dawson is SWOOP Analytics' Director, External Relationships & External Communication.

She is experienced in media and communications, having spent more than a decade working for Australian Associated Press (AAP) in the Sydney, Canberra and London bureaux. Sharon has covered Olympic and Commonwealth Games, worked in the Australian federal press gallery, reported on federal elections and been a sports correspondent for many years. Sharon joined the SWOOP team in 2017 as it expanded into the United States. Sharon holds a Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies) from The University of Newcastle.

Additional SWOOP Contributors

SWOOP platform examples and editorial contributions
Matt Dodd
Cai Kjaer

Graphic Design and Report Production
Erin Syddall

WWW.SWOOPANALYTICS.COM

SWOOP
collaboration analytics