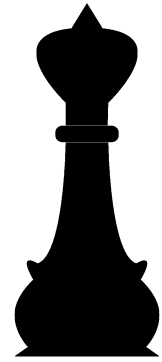


How The Red Cross Builds, Grows, and Sustains Communities



SPEAKERS

Ernesto Izquierdo (ICRC) and Kelly Schott (TheCR)

COMPETENCIES

Strategy

MATURITY PHASES

CMM1, CMM2, CMM3, CMM4

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Interested in creating your own community handbook for managing a virtual community?** Ernesto shared 6 best practices that are used within the ICRC's manual.
- **Have trouble getting people to move into action/get on board when implementing change management practices?** Ernesto shared his ADKAR model – 5 steps that can be used nicely in conjunction with community management processes.
- **Want to know Ernesto's biggest lesson learned for managing communities?** Interestingly, it's something that IT does, but most organizations don't transfer it over to community management.
- **Is taking care of yourself a problem, especially during this crisis?** Ernesto shared 2 practical and easy-to-implement ideas that will help you to put yourself and your team first so that you don't burnout.

OVERVIEW

- **Background Ernesto Izquierdo, ICRC.** Ernesto has worked in community management for the last 8 years. He started at the European Commission, then a small non-profit and then the ICRC for the last 6 years.
 - At the ICRC, they work in conflict zones with protection and assistance to victims of conflict. They are in over 90 countries with 20,000 people worldwide.
 - The Corona Virus has hit the ICRC just as hard as any other organization. They are based in Geneva with 1000 staff. France, Italy and Switzerland surround them, which has had a big impact on their daily activities. It's no longer business as usual.
 - Communities in the countries that they serve are affected more and more on a daily basis, posing a huge challenge. Fortunately, senior leadership supports communities and communities of conflict.
 - Internal networks were strong a couple of years ago, but participation dropped. This crisis has brought back engagement in a big way.



BEST PRACTICES

- Consider the best practices within the ICRC's *Creating and Managing a Virtual Community Manual*. The manual was created in 2017. The framework might be a little outdated, but Ernesto is still using it successfully with colleagues.
 - **Why create a community?** A community is not the online tool. A community is not Jive. Community is the people in the field, in HQ and in the different delegations.
 - **Purpose-driven collaboration/engagement.** This occurs through face-to-face engagements, emails, through Skype or other online conferences, through Jive or through SharePoint team spaces or through their Company Intranet. The idea is to mobilize the community to be specific about their objectives. All of the resources will be used; the online community is just one of those resources. Each community leader is asked for the purpose that he/she is trying to achieve. It's only with that clear objective in mind that a community can truly be engaged.

CREATING AND MANAGING A VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

A practical manual



BEST PRACTICES

- **Consider these steps for creating and launching a community.** ICRC uses 4 steps, which are based on the work of Richard Millington of FeverBee:
 - **Plan.** Before launching, of course you need to plan. What will it look like? What is the goal? What resources are needed and how will it be funded?
 - **Launch.** How do you help people? How do you create a webinar to show how to use the community? How do you get senior management on board?
 - **Encourage.** How do you encourage participation? How do you create engagement? Who will help lead it? How do you create Working Out Loud circles?
 - **Manage.** How do you go through the different processes to sustain activity and/or close the community once the goals are achieved? Keep in mind that it's perfectly okay to close communities that have filled their purpose.

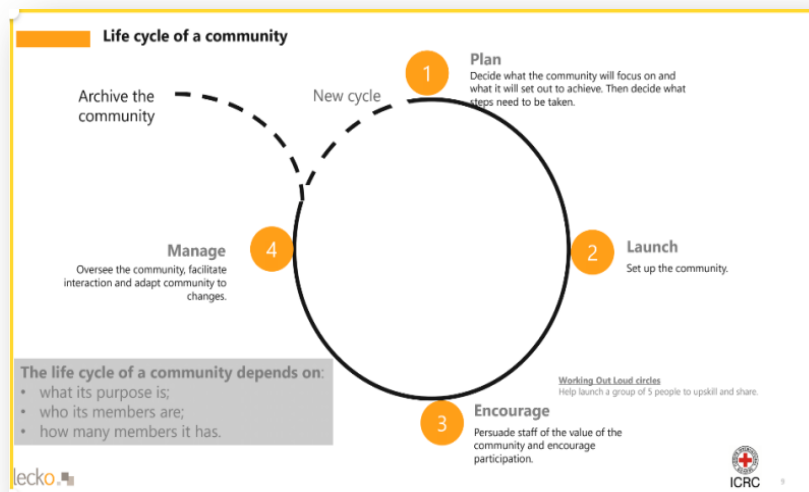


Figure 1 - Lifecycle of a Community - Slide 9*

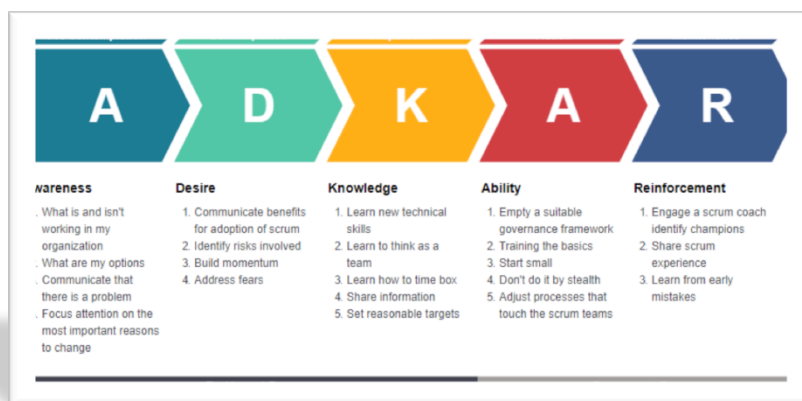
*All slides used with permission from Ernesto Izquierdo (ICRC) in his presentation to TheCR on March 18, 2020 entitled: "How The Red Cross Builds, Grows and Sustains Communities."

BEST PRACTICES

- **Why have a community?** There are 3 main objectives for a community at the ICRC:
 - **To help everyone work better together.** There are 20,000 people in 90 plus countries. Information was scattered and questions didn't always get to the right people and/or responses were slow to be received. So, they needed a way in which peers could help each other.
 - **To enhance peer-to-peer support.** Using the same logic, they wanted to help people find solutions across regions and across delegations so as not to reinvent the wheel.
 - **To connect the field with HQ.** There was so much knowledge, but it wasn't being shared across the different regions and delegations. There are 200 plus sites worldwide and this was a way to help make sure the correct information could be shared with those who needed it in the field.
 - Prior to community, they had workshops with people from different parts of the organization, but there wasn't a global forum where everyone could comment and be a part of the conversation. Not all comments will be acted upon, of course, but people can at least feel that their voices are heard.
- **What to bear in mind when building a community.** There are 3 key areas:
 - **Interest levels.** There will be differing levels of interest among colleagues regarding online collaborative work. Identify which staff are likely to be enthusiastic, curious, skeptical or resistant. Work with those who are most amenable to the idea. Don't waste your time on those who are not interested.
 - **Endorsement.** Seek the backing of someone higher up in the organization, i.e. a sponsor. This will help give weight to your community idea, as well as to ensure that the community objectives align with organizational priorities.
 - Gauge your sponsor's level of commitment and then identify opportunities for him/her to become involved in the launch of the community.
 - **Benefits.** Identify what each member can expect to gain by joining the community. These benefits may be immediate or may depend on how many people participate. They may help individually or the entire organization.

BEST PRACTICES

- **ADKAR model.** This is a form of change management that can be used in conjunction with your community management processes. It helps the ICRC to ask the right questions when it comes to discussing community because not every request is appropriate for a community. Some requests are best kept to projects using project management tools. Understand that you can't move someone into action with just knowledge. However, the following steps – and the corresponding questions – can help:
 - **Awareness.** Do they understand and agree with the rationale for introducing something new?
 - **Desire.** Do they want this change to take place or would they prefer for things to stay as they are? What would make it more appealing to them?
 - **Knowledge.** Do they know what will be required of them and which new skills they will have to develop?
 - **Ability.** Do they feel capable of putting these new skills into practice?
 - **Reinforcement.** Are they getting the right support and encouragement to enable them to make this change?



BEST PRACTICES

- **Help people learn how to tele-work during the Corona Virus crisis.** Ernesto outlined how they are helping people to tele-work during the COVID-19 crisis. For many, it is a steep learning curve.
 - ***Company intranet.*** Ernesto showed on his screen the ICRC's company intranet. The homepage has a tab for current news, a tab for teams (SharePoint, communities on Jive), a tab for communities (including peer-to-peer communities that were just created a week ago) and a tab for "Ask the ICRC" (their Q&A solution to large knowledge management documents).
 - Each tab is further broken down with links and tabs to current information.
 - They recently installed a WHO (World Health Organization) chat bot with some tips from the WHO. This feature has the ability to answer questions based on the WHO's knowledge base.
 - The peer-to-peer community has blogs written by Ernesto and his communication director. One heading shown was: "How to Participate in Online Meetings – Join the Discussion for Tips and Advice".
 - The peer-to-peer community doesn't only concentrate on business related matters. It also has tips for keeping kids busy with crafts during this time when everyone is home, tips and discussions for dealing with anxiety/mental health resources, cooking ideas and inspirational quotes. These aren't appropriate on the main page, but are just as valid and just as needed as people try to cope. Community is an amazing resource during a crisis.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Rachel asked which audience Ernesto had in mind when they wrote the manual. It was written for their online community leaders. They have over 218 internal communities. They thought that they would have 10 (external) communities in 6 months and now they have 80 communities. They put a governance process in place recognizing that it's not the numbers that count, but rather the quality. Therefore, each community needed to have a set of guidelines to properly launch, the basis for the creation of the manual.
- Rachel reinforced Ernesto's point about not wasting time with those who are not interested in becoming involved with community. If people don't have enough motivation to get in touch with you in the interest of collaboration in an equal way, you don't have the time to try and sell them on the idea. When it affects them, they'll reach out to you. This crisis is seeing many people now reach out as they scramble to keep in touch and work remotely.
- Rachel pointed out that before discussing the channel step, TheCR discusses behaviors. If you are trying to do X, this is the most appropriate place to do it, this is the least appropriate place to do it and this is an optional place. For example, comparing email to community. If it is something that could benefit the greater organization, community is the best place because as soon as the question is asked, it is documented and open to all for a response vs. the more limited scope of the email channel. The purpose of a discussion at this point is to help people understand how to better align with their workflows by consciously thinking about what it is that they are trying to achieve and, therefore, the tools that will best help to them in that context.
 - Ernesto said that they call it "use case" instead of behavior, but that isn't always readily understood. Rachel added that when she strategizes, they look at all the different use cases that could possibly exist, place them in a diagram and then see how many use cases can be consolidated around different behaviors. So, which ones are predicated on asking questions, sharing status updates, etc. When they take those key behaviors – the ones that are the most applicable to the most use cases – those are the ones that people really need to understand. Those use cases are then rolled up into behaviors.



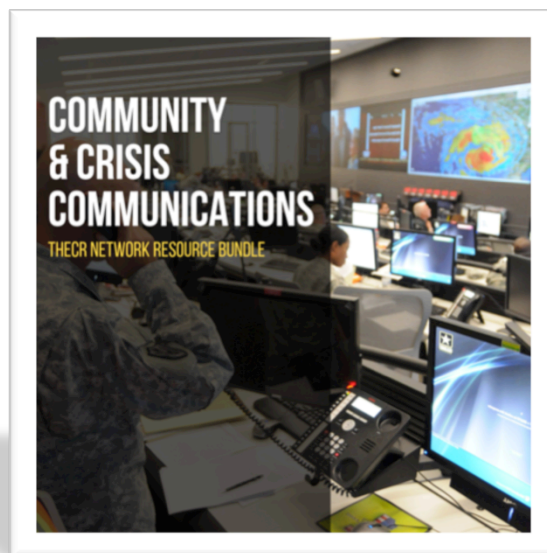
LESSONS LEARNED

- Ernesto is working on turning 40-page documents into Q&A documents. They are using an Artificial Intelligence tool called Starmine. They pre-fill Starmine with questions, which they call “Ask ICRC.” The tool then answers the questions from the knowledge-base document.
- At this point, there is more of a shift towards remote working vs. community work as a larger set of skills.
- Rachel asked which staff members are reaching out to Ernesto now, as a result of this crisis. She was also interested in their first question asked. The bulk of the questions are from people who had face-to-face events booked, which were cancelled, and now they want to transfer the event online. The other question is how to continue with face-to-face meetings online.
- Keep in mind that telecommunications companies are struggling to keep up with the new demand for licences and keeping people connected. That will, obviously, have an effect on companies who are scrambling to keep staff connected.
- Ernesto does not have community management staff, per se. However, there are community managers for the different communities. He sets up monthly training for these community managers to help them define their strategy. In the beginning it was more governance, now it is strategy. Furthermore, to help himself scale, he doesn't answer one-on-one questions. He holds Q&A Skype sessions every 2 weeks. It was a necessity to prevent burnout.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Fortunately, the ICRC has a crisis management team. They have a full team with 8 people who handle communications. The nature of their work calls for the ability to communicate during a crisis, so they at least have experience in this type of scenario. There is a strong network of colleagues in the field and in HQ trained to be able to communicate during any type of crisis. There are several channels for communication, one of which is the Internet. This has put the ICRC in a bit of a better position than most companies who are scrambling during this crisis.
 - Rachel shared that an educational institution that she has been working with is trying to get things perfect before communicating out and it's just not working. Ernesto agreed, citing a quote from the ICRC's CEO "In a crisis, perfect is the enemy of good." You need to be fast and with that comes errors. Recognize that you're going to make mistakes. A command and control approach doesn't work in a crisis. The ICRC is not only dealing with what everyone else is dealing with, but also those countries in conflict, as well as different languages and cultures. You can't be perfect and you have to enable others to act knowing that they won't be perfect, either.
 - Rachel added that communities can help push sensing capacity (what's going on), as well as the capacity to respond at the edges. Agree on a principal perspective and then empower the rest of the staff to deal with whatever is coming at them in the field.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Rachel thought it would be a good exercise to benchmark people who have access to community vs. those who don't regarding their emotional state and anxiety levels. Just asking the question: "How do you feel right now?" to be answered on a scale of 1-10. A simple survey could yield very interesting results. A comparison study could be conducted to see if people have all the information they need, whether they feel connected, how they are managing working remotely, etc. The answers to these simple questions compared to those who do and don't have access to the community could be useful information for the future. It could help to make the case for more seats for everybody.
 - Ernesto agreed, but added that it is less on the financial side and more on the IT capacity side. But if people are really struggling to feel connected, capacity might be more of an issue than having more information. The data could help to support that switch if it showed that more seats are needed.
 - Rachel added that we don't normally have a situation that is so urgent that it truly demonstrates the impact of having a community vs. not having a community. However, if you were to present this data, don't focus on community. Focus more on the necessity for access to different channels.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Ernesto's big lesson learned is to encourage your organization to have at least 2 people with a similar vision/role/leadership role for community within the organization, even if you work 50/50 on the role. Ensure redundancy otherwise it is all on the shoulders of one person and that could spell chaos for an organization. An organization works to have redundancy in IT and this should work the same way.
- There is a balance that needs to be top of mind. Yes, it was discussed that perfection is a luxury and speed is of the essence, but that is in a crisis. For those trying to set up communities under normal circumstances, it is prudent to slow it down and have them follow a governance structure to ensure that the proper measures are in place prior to the launch of a new community.
- Kelly asked Ernesto how he is taking the time to take care of himself during this crisis. Ernesto stated that he will challenge deadlines if they are unrealistic in order to protect himself and his team. If it is not truly a crucial, time-sensitive request, challenge what is being asked of you. Secondly, don't answer one-on-one questions. Bring others into the response through a webinar or Skype or a blog, etc. so that you are not repeating the same response over and over.



RESOURCES

- Kelly asked participants to share whether or not they felt that their executives or senior leaders are supportive of community:
 - Very supportive. However, almost to the point of feeling watched. Especially in light of the COVID-19 crisis, this participant is being asked for help to post blogs quite often throughout the day. This participant is on the cusp of launching their very first online community (which is being accelerated in the wake of the current crisis). It was originally going to be piloted with small groups, but this participant is getting daily requests to expedite and add multiple groups at the same time because the conference side of the business has been put on hold until the summer. Rachel said that this is an interesting pressure point. All of the members are being asked to model this behavior for their organizations, but they don't yet know how to do it.
 - In this next participant's experience, he has yet to find an organization that understands – at the senior level – the importance of community and messaging it. When this participant was at Microsoft and Yammer there was one executive who used it for cohorts in their high-potential leadership development. It was phenomenal to see, but rare in this participant's experience.
 - Another participant would say that leadership is very supportive of the online community and is encouraging customers to join, particularly during this challenging time.
 - One participant is neutral on the question. She is trying to push forward their merge of community so that they can use the community more in messaging during this unprecedented time.
 - Lastly, two other participants voiced very supportive leaderships.

