Feature Spotlight: Communities

Clearvale communities provide a way for groups of network members to work together. Communities enable network members to:

- Work together toward a common goal
- Share information on a particular topic

Communities are useful for organizing information for projects in a central location, encouraging collaboration between team members, and controlling access to sensitive information.

Setting Up a Community

Before creating a community, think about the following:

- What is the purpose of the community?
- Who must participate in the community? Who else might be interested in the business being conducted in the community?
- Who will add the content to this community?
- Is the community content private? Or, can anyone see the content?

For example, if you are creating a community for new hires, you might answer these questions as follows:

Proposed community: New hires	
Purpose	Provide single location for all documents and forms that must be read and signed by employees. Provide forum for new employees to ask questions. Allow all employees to answer new hire questions--not just HR employees.
Participants	All employees, not just new hires. All employees will benefit by having access to employee documents that will appear in this community.
Content	The HR department would be responsible for the content in this community. A majority of the content probably already resides in other locations and simply needs to be added or linked to in the community.
Privacy	The content in this community would be limited to community members (employees).

By answering these questions before creating a community, you are clear on the community's purpose, know who to invite to join the community, and can easily add the content.

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Adding Content to Your Community

When you create a community, several widgets are initially placed in the community. They are empty by default. You can work with the provided widgets, or more likely you will want to customize the widgets that you need in your community. For example, you may want to add a Freeform widget that provides links to certain documents, or you may want to add the poll widget to gather preferences from community members. Remove any widgets that you do not plan to use in your community.

When you add content while working in community, Clearvale assumes that you want to add the content to the community space. This includes when you upload files, images, videos, or blogs. Content is added to the community space by sharing the content with the community. You can decide to share the content with network members or other individuals as well if needed.

If you have a lot of files within your community, consider creating community-specific file folders to organize the files that are shared with the community.

Managing Community Members

You can set up your community so that you:

- Invite specific network members to join the community
- Let network members join on their own

If you invite community members, the network member gets a message about being invited to the community and needs to accept the invitation. At that point, they are a member of the community.

If you allow network members to join on their own, you can either allow anyone access to the community and not require any additional approval before joining the community. Alternatively, you can require that anyone who is interested in joining a community is approved before they are granted access to the community.

As a network administrator, when you invite new members to the network, you can pre-assign the member to belong to one or more communities. In this case, the new member is automatically a member of the communities specified. No joining and no approval is necessary.

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Categorizing Communities

If you have more than a few communities, you might want to consider using folders to group related communities. Folders of communities allow network members to quickly navigate to the communities in which they might be interested.

A community can belong to multiple folders. For example, if you have a community for California salespeople, it might belong to the community folders "California communities" and "Sales communities."

Managing Communities

Each community needs current content and active members to be relevant. Here are some tips for meeting this goal:

- Be sure the right people are invited and have joined the community.
- Encourage participation by keeping community content fresh and relevant to the community members.
- Include a forum to encourage participation. Forums make it easy for someone to ask a question. Make sure that questions presented in the forum are being answered. If you do not know the answer, encourage other community members to comment.
- Polls are another easy way to encourage community participation.
- Use email to notify community members of new content in the community. Include links in the email to the new content in the community.

As the community administrator, you also need to monitor the content on your community. For example, if someone posts inappropriate content, ask the author to remove the content. Or, you can remove the content yourself as the community administrator. For repeat offenders, you might consider removing the person from the community.