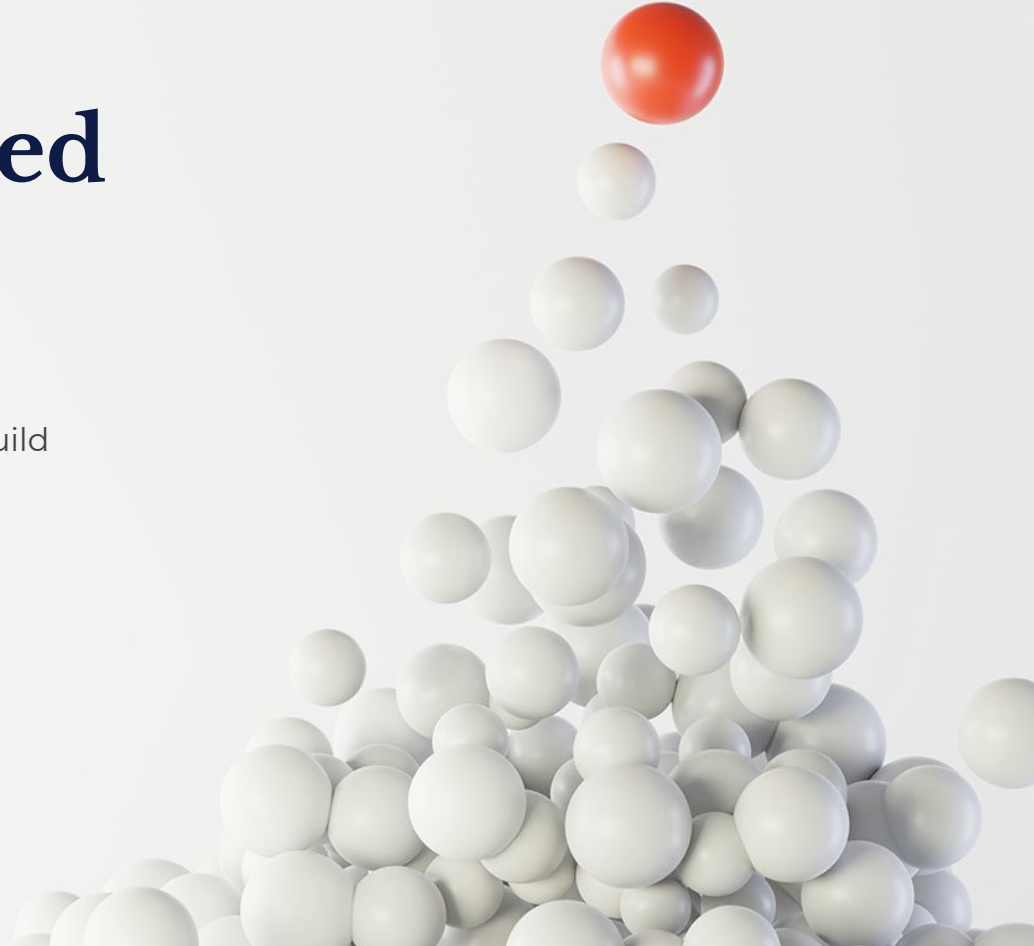Strategy Session:

Why Distributed Leadership?

The only strategy that determines if your community thrives or dies—and how to build your own, now.

Led by Alexis Luscutoff with Mobilize & Jayme Little with AASPT

Communities don't build themselves

The *real* reason communities fail

Communities are living, breathing organisms — they're always iterating.

Community members need to see examples for participation from people like them. Distributed leadership is a tried and true process that creates a path to activation and success.

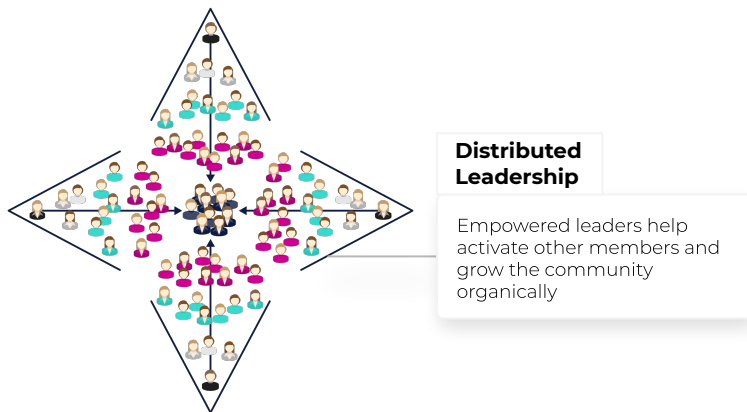The communities that fail are the ones without distributed leadership.

Groups of lichens form tiny ecosystems with many other organisms.

Learning from others is a great way to activate members.

*If you **just** build it, they won't come....*

Distributed Leadership

Empowered leaders help activate other members and grow the community organically

Traditional

The central hub becomes a choke point for members inhibiting growth.

The *secret* to thriving communities

To put it simply, **distributed leadership** means leadership responsibilities are delegated to the hands of many.

In online communities, it's about empowering your colleagues and community members to lead your community with you.

It probably feels scary to sacrifice a little bit of control, but relinquishing control will be worth it once you experience the benefits to your community.
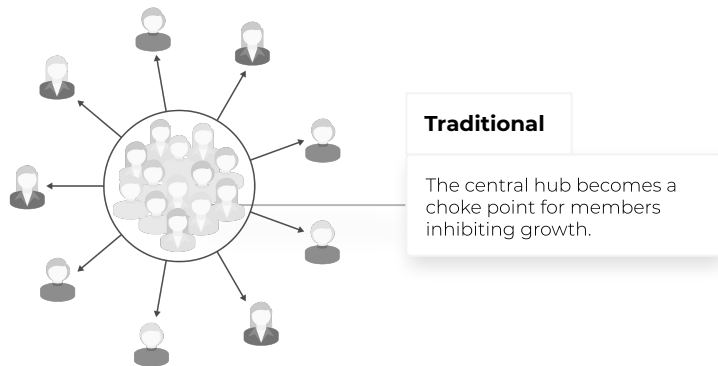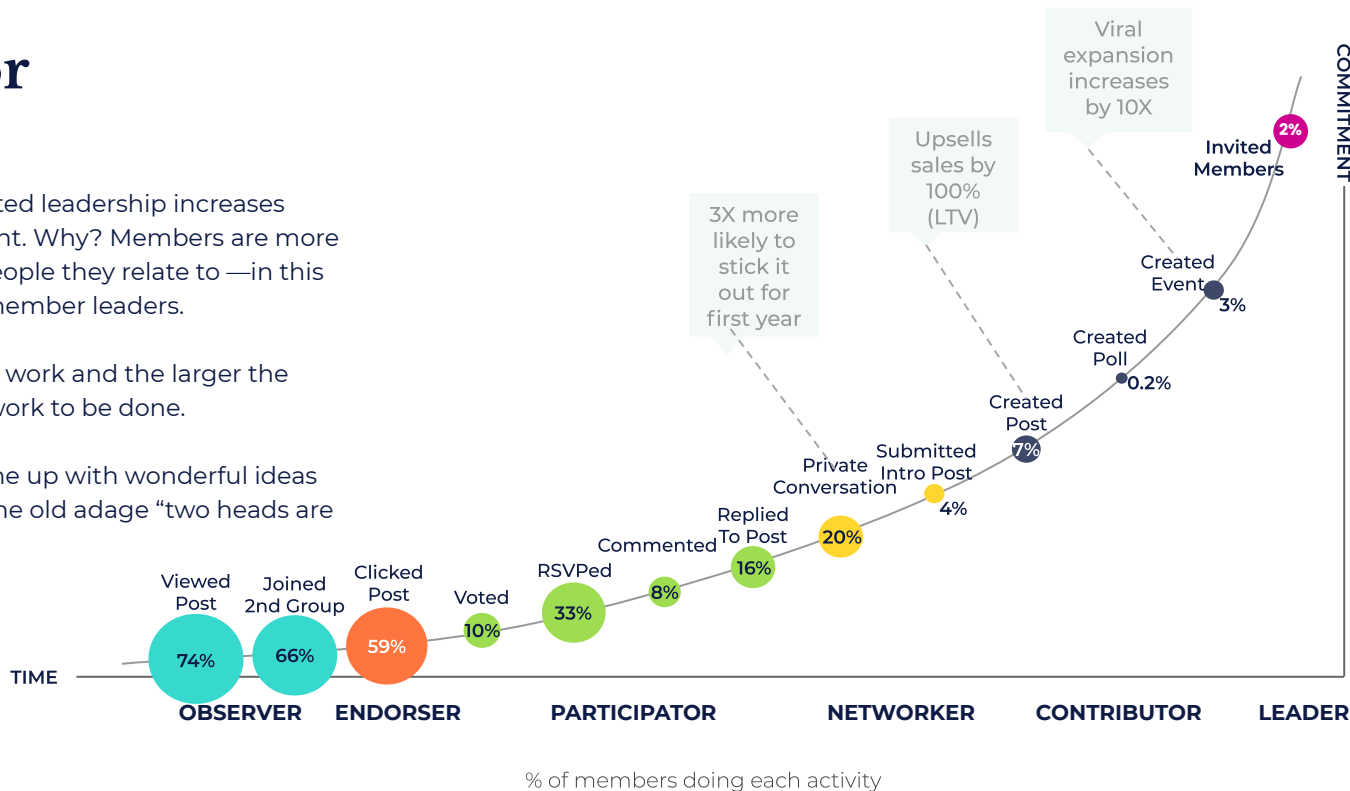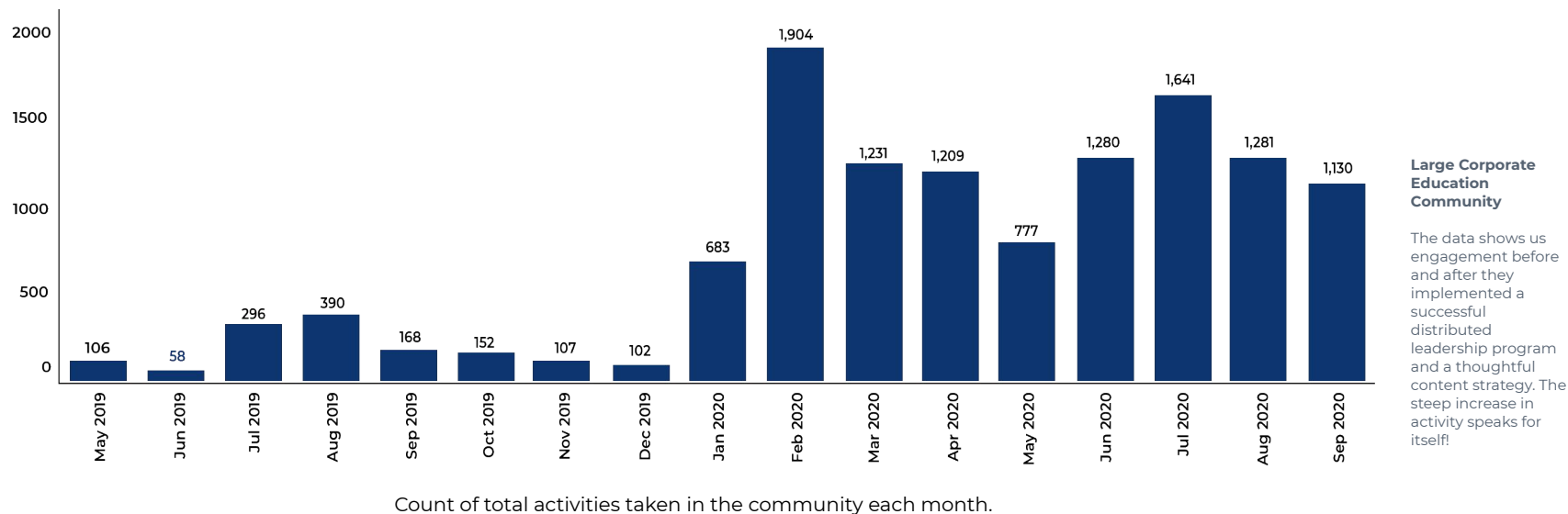
A predictor of success

It's proven that distributed leadership increases community engagement. Why? Members are more likely to engage with people they relate to —in this case, your distributed member leaders.

Many hands make light work and the larger the community, the more work to be done.

Distributed leaders come up with wonderful ideas for engagement —it's the old adage "two heads are better than one."
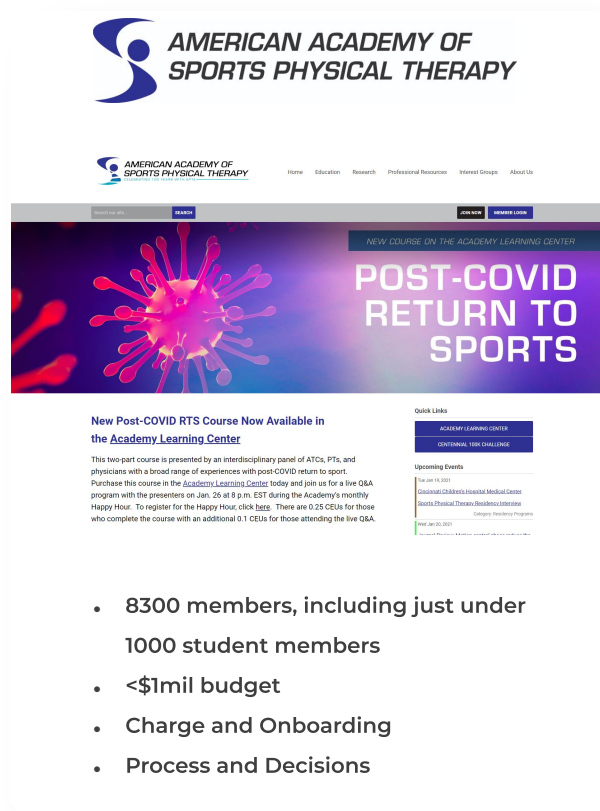

COMMITMENT

Viral expansion increases by 10X

Invited Members **2%**

Created Event **3%**

Created Poll **0.2%**

Upsells sales by 100% (LTV)

Created Post **7%**

3X more likely to stick it out for first year

Submitted Intro Post **4%**

Private Conversation **20%**

Replied To Post **16%**

Commented **8%**

RSVPed **33%**

Voted **10%**

Clicked Post **59%**

Joined 2nd Group **66%**

Viewed Post **74%**

TIME

OBSERVER   **ENDORSER**   **PARTICIPATOR**   **NETWORKER**   **CONTRIBUTOR**   **LEADER**

% of members doing each activity

Comparison
Impact of
Distributed Leadership

Count of total activities taken in the community each month.

Large Corporate Education Community

The data shows us engagement before and after they implemented a successful distributed leadership program and a thoughtful content strategy. The steep increase in activity speaks for itself!

Background of AASPT

The American Academy of Sports Physical Therapy (AASPT) provides a common forum for members of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) with an interest in sports physical therapy. We promote excellence in sports physical therapy practice, research, education, and professional development.

- 8300 members, including just under 1000 student members
- <$1mil budget
- Charge and Onboarding
- Process and Decisions

Talking Strategy

With Jayme Little

AASPT Director of Member Engagement

What was AASPT's approach to a DLP?

"We had special interest groups before Mobilize.

Our academy is built upon SIGs or programs tied to the body for specific subject matter.

Our leaders in our SIGs were asking us for a better way to communicate with our members but we were missing the environment where this could be done..

Mobilize had a platform that was uniquely set up to support our approach to these groups, and had a plan to help make our interest group leaders successful.

The unique population we work with aren't at their computers all day, so we needed a solution that fit into their daily practice."

The process behind creating a DLP.

Who you are identifying to do the work?

"We had our vice-chairs in the group be our managers because we wanted a strategic lens applied. "

What's in it for them?

"Increased feedback from membership directly to the SIG leadership."

What do you need them to do on a regular cadence?

"Review and update the content calendar.
Post, post, post! And engage with posts and share product experience so that it can be relayed up. Stick with the plan for three months and then we'll evaluate."

What does accountability look like?

"Reporting back on the success of the program data share, 75% of leaders are most active, and 25% of leaders need a nudge."

How long have the agreed to do this?

"3-month commitment at a minimum would be the recommendation."

Staying on the same page

"Create a leaders group - to communicate directly on strategy."

"Have a content calendar - clarity on what's being shared, when and why."

"Regular calls - keeping line of site and dialogue."

Getting leaders to get to know each other

How do you balance between managing the leaders and managing the community?

"Priority is managing leaders, so they can manage their content.

Members are looking for posts in their special interest groups (SIGs, and you need to utilize your leaders to manage their subcommunities to ensure they're stable before focusing on the parent community.

And this is also inline with what Mobilize recommends other groups do. Specifically, empowering leaders to create content and help members engage. In this case, the priority content lives in the SIG subgroups. And ensuring that widely applicable content is posted in the main parent group, so everyone in the community can see it.

Think about time split: **75% managing leaders, 25% managing community."**

- Make sure your data is accurate in the database
- Ensure your member data is transferred to the database
- Regular posting in the community home
- Identifying posts that could be highlighted
- Encouraging members to post in main group

How do you share management between leaders and staff

How much ownership do you give leaders? When do they need to ask you before doing things?

"We're encouraging and give a strong level of ownership to our leaders. We want them to try things and explore, and we'll reign things in if needed."

What's your philosophy about giving leaders room to try things out that might not work?

"Evaluate your relationship with leaders, understand their intent so you can trust what activities they're going to own. It goes back to the strategy document and aligning to what the platform is for, the purpose and what it's not for. Understand how leaders align to the member value."

What if something that a leader does doesn't work?

"Get into the habit of evaluating activities daily and taking action. Use a player/coach mentality to course correct."

How did you get your team and your board to be okay with leaders taking some of the reins?

"Our group has been driven by volunteers, this was core to our culture from the beginning. But if this is something new for you, have a plan for how to bring success to these leaders."

How to understand success and improve

Be sure to have a clear path for visualizing performance in the community with leaders, members and staff. We use Google Data Studio to visualize performance and review with our leaders.

With any visualization, you need to identify the success metrics that help you grow your leaders. Align these metrics and visualizations, first. Think about:

- **Understanding who's active and not active.**
- **Who's contributing and not contributing.**
- **What metrics help you moving people up the engagement ladder.**
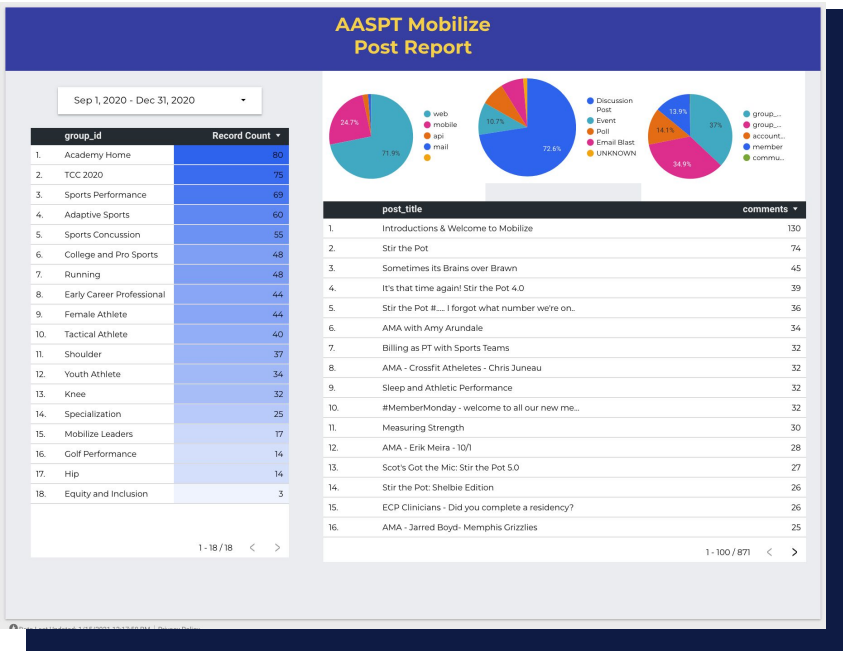
Learnings & Pitfalls

What went right?

"Our DLP worked well for the most part. I trained the leaders and supported them. Our groups bought in early to the plan for our community, and this helped to alleviate a lot of stress."

What went wrong?

"Our plan was executed well. Individual groups and leaders did well for the most part, but there were some that struggled and I now clearly see that after looking at the 3-month analytics. These groups were not a surprise to us and I should have anticipated their challenges and supported them more in the first three months."

What lessons did you learn so other people here don't have to do the same?

"I felt like we were shooting in the dark for the first three months as we established baseline data on our community. Really focus on your plan and the purpose of your group/s. This will help to calm your nerves."

What's next for this program and the community?

What's next for staff leadership?

"Spending some time in Q2 focusing on the four or so underperforming groups. Spending time on analytics with a focus on presenting information to groups to help them make decision. Focusing on Academy Home, our parent group, to see what we can do to foster greater contributions here that will funnel to our groups."

How will you do ongoing recruiting and onboarding?

"Our leadership teams are pretty stable for the time being, but as new people come on I am having 1:1 conversations with them."

How do you foresee maintaining the program?

"Focus on supporting the needs of our leadership, and as was shared on the community on Jan 15, demonstrating through best practice implementation."

What about sponsorships?

"We plan on spending time in Q3 focusing on monetizing our platform, doing what other Mobilize clients have done with sponsorship."

What does the board need?

"Richer analytics, and we're working on this along with Mobilize setting this as a priority. Look forward to better engagement metrics we can rely on to make decisions."

Join the discussion in our
Mobilizers Community

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