

Using B2B Infrastructure to Support Consumer and Small Business Communication



Overview

- 2-phase, 10-part diary study that invited community admins to:
 - Create Communities in newly-launched Communities feature in Microsoft Teams using both mobile and desktop
 - Reflect on first-run experience and provide product feedback
- Socialization of insights included:
 - Deck and shareout with design, PM, eng, and data science
 - Workshop with Growth and Onboarding PM team
 - Shared insights in Consumer IA and Consumer Flavor sprints
 - Served as lead researcher for Consumer Flavor sprint and conducted additional user research within a week
 - Sharing of findings to inform discovery and template work
 - Co-authored Consumer Design Vision Deck with design team
- Insights had sweeping impact, including:
 - Informed team vision/roadmap to differentiate B2B/enterprise Teams from B2C/consumer Teams
 - Shifted team's thinking about relationship between mobile and desktop, resulting in changes to design org chart





Teams and Teams Communities

- The consumer version of MSFT Teams adapts Teams infrastructure for personal use
 - Enterprise and consumer Teams share a backend, but the UX and feature sets are tailored to different audiences
 - Communities feature in Microsoft Teams was introduced in December 2022 to support interest-based and local group coordination, similar to Facebook Groups or Discord
 - Communities empower members to post updates, organize events, and share files in a structured, moderated space
 - The Communities feature was created to make Teams more useful for non-work contexts like sports teams, parent groups, or hobby clubs
 - Consumer Teams and GroupMe were in the same org and had a UXR team of 5, a design team of 16, and a PM team of 35
 - The requirement to pass Experience Reviews led by UXR for feature release ensured consistent collaboration and communication between UXR and cross-functional partners, and all research projects were grounded in feedback from PM and design
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Timeline

- Dec. '22 Communities feature launches on iOS and Android
Phase 1 of diary study on mobile usage
 - Jan. '23 Early insights from phase 1 shared with team
Communities feature launches on Windows 11
Phase 2 of diary study examining desktop usage
 - Feb. '23 Full report and shareout for design, PM, eng, and data science
 - Feb. '23 Led workshop based on insights with Growth and
Onboarding PM team (7 PMs)
 - Mar. '23 Shared out findings from study to inform template work
for creation of new Communities
 - Apr. '23 Shared out findings from study to inform discovery work
 - May '23 Consumer Flavor Sprint: Conducted 8 1:1 user interviews to gather
feedback on designs created during one-week sprint; shared a report
with team the following week
 - June '23 Authored Consumer Design Vision Deck with design team
 - Jul. '23 Shared UXR literature review in Consumer IA sprint
 - Aug. '23 Communities roll out to Win10, macOS, web browsers
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Stakeholder deliverables and subsequent activities

- Jan: Early insights from phase 1 shared with team in sprint deck
- Feb: Full report and shareout to cross-functional team
- Feb: Facilitated co-creation workshop based on insights with Growth and Onboarding PM team (7 PMs)
- Mar/Apr: Shared additional findings directly with Growth and Onboarding PM team to inform template and discovery work
- May: Conducted 8 1:1 user interviews to gather feedback on designs created during a one-week sprint inspired by recommendations from this study; shared a report with team the following week
- June: Co-authored design vision deck with design team based on insights from this study
- Jul: Included in UXR literature review in Consumer IA sprint



Research methods

- **Research goals:** Evaluate the first-run experience of new feature immediately following mobile launch (phase 1, n=11) and desktop launch (phase 2, n=7)
- **Recruitment:** Dscout screener survey asking respondents about their communities and tooling (n=177)
- **Selection:** Selected 18 admins from a range of community sizes (3-100+) and types (Small businesses, academic, creative, recreational, entertainment, events, etc.)
- **Data collection:** 10-part diary study with a mix of video and written prompts where participants shared information about their communities before creating Communities in Teams and reflecting on the experience
- **Data analysis:** Grounded theory coding, where data is fractured and then analyzed by theme rather than by participant





Overall, users understood the value proposition of the feature, but felt that it wasn't executed well.

Participants validated the product's value proposition, and they added nuance and complexity to team understanding of target user groups. However, they also shared critiques and concerns.

Key pain points and desires

- Participants felt uncomfortable using Teams for non-work purposes because they associated Teams with work and school, and they were concerned about information leakage across enterprise and consumer Teams
 - Younger participants felt that the product lacked consumer flavor, customization options, and delight
 - Respondents compared Teams to competitors such as Discord and Facebook Groups unfavorably
 - Participants felt that customization could help them differentiate between enterprise and consumer Teams
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Make it fun, and make it cohesive across devices!

The user insights generated by this study accomplished the following:

- Highlighted critical importance of infusing product with consumer flavor to compete in the marketplace
 - Drew attention to the need for differentiation between enterprise and consumer Teams to ease negative associations and concerns about information leakage across platforms
 - Advocated for cross-platform awareness, resulting in a shift in scope and ownership from form-factor-based teams to feature-based teams; continued building on this understanding in my next study on Channels/conversation hierarchy.
 - Contributed to team's understanding of the types of users and communities that might use product
 - Raised awareness about a specific user persona (members) that previously did not get as much attention
 - Insights drove development of GroupMe Campus Connect
 - Highlighted bugs and issues having to do with craft/quality
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Research craft leadership

In this study, I demonstrated my research craft leadership by:

- Designing a multi-phase, multi-form factor diary study under tight launch timelines
 - Building lightweight recruitment pipelines when user base was small
 - Creating repeatable synthesis and resocialization practices across sprints
 - Leading co-creation activities to support PMs and designers in integrating research into fast-moving product cycles
 - Remaining in close collaboration with my cross-functional team as recommendations were implemented, leading to subsequent design decisions, sprints, vision decks, and follow-up studies.
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