

Assessment 1: Online Community Search

The following two online communities are examples of spaces where an individual can connect, learn, and be inspired to make personal and professional changes and improvements.

SPARKPEOPLE – www.sparkpeople.com

Founded in Cincinnati, Ohio by Chris Downie and launching in 2001, SparkPeople.com was originally created as a goal setting site. In 2002, they transitioned into a site for nutrition and fitness. Initially operating as a paid site, SparkPeople changed to a free site in 2005. While the site is free to join and members have access to all of their features, they do offer a premium membership for \$4.99 a month or a one-time fee of \$29.99. This premium membership includes an ad-free site, free eBook, and access to personalized coaching from SparkPeople Coach and advanced reports with the ability to download the data. With currently over 16,000,000 members, SparkPeople reports having approximately 7,000,000 visitors each month.

The goal of SparkPeople.com is to create an engaging and supportive community which “sparks people” to live a happier, healthier life while reaching their weight and fitness goals. They aim to inspire and motivate their members to build healthy and sustainable habits which will continue for a lifetime. The site offers members access to a variety of valuable tools that are accessible across all devices. Some of these tools include: a database of over 500,000 healthy recipes; exercise, water, and food trackers as well as trackers for other goals; a personal blog; the ability to earn daily spark points which can be traded in for icons and digital badges; spark teams and message boards to help members connect with other members who have similar goals and interests; informational pages on a variety of health and fitness related topics and **SparkPeople TV** where members can stream hundreds of exercise and cooking videos.

EDMODO – www.edmodo.com

Founded in Chicago, Illinois by Nic Borg, Jeff O'Hara, and Crystal Hutter and launching in 2008, Edmodo.com was created to not only bring education into the 21st century but “to bridge the gap between how students live their lives and how they learn.” According to their website, Edmodo currently has 75,135,658 members and is a global leader among the K-12 social learning networks. Edmodo is committed to connecting learners with the resources and educators they will need to be successful.

With a look and feel similar to Facebook and student capabilities similar to Google Classroom, Edmodo’s social learning community aims to connect parents, teachers, and students through a safe and secure system. Edmodo allows both teachers and students to create accounts. Teachers can create and manage classes, initiate discussion forums and post class assignments. Students can join classes using codes provided by their teachers to respond to discussions and complete assignments. Teachers can also create blogs and engage in discussions with other educators to share ideas, best practices, and innovative stories. Other Edmodo features include a calendar, grade books, a library, and the ability to create groups, quizzes, and polls.

What constitutes an exemplary community?

Communities are made up of individuals or groups of people who all have a common goal, interest, or problem that needs to be solved. These individuals seek out spaces where they can learn, discuss or even find someone to sympathize with their plight. In the past, these communities of people often met in public places to share their thoughts and stories face to face. Women interested in knitting, for example, may meet weekly at the library or individuals interested in walking may meet daily at a mall. Today, we seek online communities where we can stay in constant contact anytime of the day or night.

What aspects of online communities make them ideal models? As people seek out communities for many different reasons, the exemplary community should meet the user's needs and have all the resources necessary to promote success, satisfaction or fill the requirements of the users. An exemplary community should encourage a sense of belonging and allow for learning, discussions, and networking in a safe environment. They should be engaging, supportive and motivate users to look for new possibilities and ideas.

Both SparkPeople and Edmodo exemplify these qualities. SparkPeople, as a place for members to seek out the motivation, tools, and community to support weight loss, fitness and proper nutrition has successfully achieved this goal. Every aspect needed to achieve healthier living has been incorporated into their community. Advice from other members, inspirational stories, a supportive community and the tools needed for success are all integrated into their site. Keeping a blog, being part of a team and even earning points and digital badges serve to keep its members on track.

Edmodo is an educational community for not only teachers but for students as well as parents. Like SparkPeople, it offers a global community where teachers can share their ideas and lessons on a variety of educational topics. Students can use Edmodo as a communication tool within their class as well as post assignments, ask questions and take quizzes. Parents have the ability to see their student's progress and support their child by getting the family involved in learning. Unlike SparkPeople, communication between students must involve the whole class or happen privately with the teacher. Edmodo encourages peer learning as well as peer-support helping to build a community of learning, conversation, and success in an online platform.

Online communities are growing and ever changing. While not all communities may be exemplary models, a community that meets the needs of its members, fosters growth and a sense of unity, and offers support is ideal.

Appendix

Turnitin Originality Report
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Stephanie Talalai January 22, 2017 EDTC 816 – Dr. Zieger Assessment 1: Online Community Search The following two online communities are examples of spaces where an individual can connect, learn, and be inspired to make personal and professional changes and improvements. SPARKPEOPLE – www.sparkpeople.com Founded in Cincinnati, Ohio by Chris Downie and launching in 2001, SparkPeople.com was originally created as a goal setting site. In 2002, they transitioned into a site for nutrition and fitness. Initially operating as a paid site, SparkPeople changed to a free site in 2005. While the site is free to join and members have access to all of their features, they do offer a premium membership for \$4.99 a month or a one-time fee of \$29.99. This

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