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Part 1 - Research

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# **1. RESEARCH ON USER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

User engagement involves measuring user interaction with a product, service or even piece of content (Userpilot, 2024). It is valuable as it gives a clear picture of how much value people derive from your product, and has a significant impact on other variables, such as customer satisfaction, conversion rates, brand loyalty, and retention (Userpilot, 2024).

To boost user engagement, user engagement strategies can be employed. According to Daniels (n.d.), Userpilot (2024), Arora (2023), and Kamal (2024), some of these user engagement strategies include:

1. Gamification
2. Building an in-app community
3. App personalization
4. Regular app optimization and updating
5. Optimizing push notifications

# **2. EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN USER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Out of the above-mentioned user engagement strategies, building an in-app community would be one of the most appropriate choices, as an in-app community will boost community cohesion and citizen involvement, adding to a solid foundation that will be able to support the application's objective of streamlining municipal services. Additionally, applications with social features receive the most weekly interaction of any application category (Daniels, n.d.).

De Vor (2023) suggests several reasons as to why building an in-app community will be beneficial. These reasons include:

* Improved User Engagement

By connecting with others, exchanging stories, and interacting with one another, an in-app community will help people feel like they belong, resulting in increased user engagement, longer user retention and more customer satisfaction (De Vor, 2023). This increased user engagement can further enhance the municipality as the application’s community will bring together it’s citizens to form one cohesive unit.

* Enhanced Customer Support

A dedicated space for discussing solutions to issues or queries within the application allows users to help one another while also providing an additional channel for customer support team (De Vor, 2023). Furthermore, this peer-to-peer support mechanism decreases the customer support team's effort while providing immediate solutions to issues outside business hours (De Vor, 2023). This speedy resolution satisfies consumers while also improving the application's customer service (De Vor, 2023).

* Valuable User Feedback

A dedicated space to discuss issues will enable users to quickly and easily share their thoughts, suggestions, and bug reports, giving the development team an easy way to collect user-generated feedback (De Vor, 2023). This feedback is invaluable as it can be used to further improve the application’s functionality, user experience, and overall quality (De Vor, 2023).

* Brand Loyalty and Advocacy

As communities can create a sense of belonging, users will feel more connected to the application and will more likely become loyal customers and advocates for the brand (De Vor, 2023). These engaged community members may become vocal advocates, promoting the application to others, leading to increased growth and user retention (De Vor, 2023).

* Product and Content Co-Creation

In-app communities will enable collaborative content creation that involves users in the decision-making process, ultimately leading to innovative ideas and content created to be aligned with user preferences and needs (De Vor, 2023). This approach strengthens the sense of ownership and pride among users, leading to increased user engagement (De Vor, 2023).

Additionally, an in-app community will provide a channel for the municipality to engage with its community, resulting in increased community engagement. According to Granicus (n.d.), this increase in community engagement will provide numerous benefits to the municipality.

Firstly, it will increase the visibility and understanding of issues whilst empowering communities to have their say over decisions; secondly, it enables community members to contribute to public decision-making processes; thirdly, government and public decision-making organizations will be able to listen and demonstrate the impact of community contribution; and lastly, it will enable deeper, stronger and more trusting relationships to be built between the municipality and its citizens (Granicus, n.d.).

# **3. APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENT THE CHOSEN STRATEGY**

MoldStud (2024) suggests numerous techniques to build an in-app community, which include:

* Creating interactive elements such as messaging services, forums, and chat rooms.
* Integrating gamification features like leaderboards, badges, challenges, and accomplishing milestones
* Enabling user-generated content creation and sharing in the app.

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