

Community Analysis of Seesaw Learning Journal

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Community Analysis: Seesaw Learning Journal

Introduction

Technology can be a disruptive tool to the educational system. Clayton Christensen in his forward of Horn and Stacker's (2015) book, *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*, describes how the paradigms confronting education are constantly being assessed, analyzed, and ultimately proven or disproven leading to innovation within a field of study. He goes further to relate how such innovations in education came with the disruptive inclusion of technology. Users in search of a means to "break a trade-off" figure out a way to offer a solution that provides more of a desired aspect without having to take anything away from an equally desired aspect.

Co-founders, Adrian Graham and Carl Sjosgreen, in 2014 made such a paradigm leap to disrupt the online educational community with the release of Seesaw. The multi-platform based application provides a digital repository for student' artifacts utilizing a journal format. By submitting pictures, recorded audio and video, notes, and PDF's, students and teachers can document their learning process. An added benefit of the Seesaw learning journal is the ability to share student work with families and a wider global community (Seesaw Features, 2016). With a strong core belief in the educational system, paired with their background as Project Managers for Google and Facebook, the co-founders followed other tech entrepreneurs into the developing educational market. Leveraging their skills and connections, Graham and Sjosgreen could gain backing for the initial startup. This was typical of the climate of the time, where investors recognized the role of technology for the expanding education arena (Petersen & Poulson, p.44). Along with a core team, that shared in the goal to support students, educators, and their families, they launched the platform that has quickly gained support from educators worldwide. To help

with this new startup, they relied heavily on the skills they gained during their time working on the travel application, Nextstop, which they attribute with teaching them the importance of community building as described by Kraut and Resnick (2012).

The following sections reflect an analysis of the Seesaw community based on an interview conducted with Emily Voigtlander, Marketing and Manager of Teacher Success Community, and Angela Gadtke, Teacher Success Outreach Coordinator on February 13, 2017.

Goals and Actions Toward Goal Attainment

The team began with the goal of developing a tool to provide a simple, easy to use platform for educators, students and families to encourage communication and collaboration, while allowing access to a broader audience. The foundation of this goal has always been and continues to be the ability to make an impact, not only on students' educational experiences, but also to broaden connections between students, families, and teacher communities. This global initiative has now expanded to countries around the world.

A member of the early team, Emily Voigtlander, was designated as online community builder and charged with Seesaw's social media and teacher ambassador communities. Mrs. Voigtlander recognized the ability of a strong social media connection in the development and growth of the Seesaw online community experience. Relying heavily on the word of mouth method by teachers was instrumental in helping Seesaw grow in several online communities. Weekly Twitter chats, a Seesaw Teachers' Facebook page, and Seesaw Ambassadors Google+ group work as supports to their growing base of followers. Working jointly, the Seesaw social media and Teacher Success team which is comprised of Emily Voigtlander and Angela Gadtke, have worked to support the expansion of Seesaw into an enterprise which respects, values and utilizes its vested community members to maintain and grow. Offering community

interaction, through virtual, digital, and face to face meetings for educators, the Teacher Success team provides training opportunities lead by teacher experts through free PD in your PJ's webinars and YouTube videos.

Throughout the interview with Emily and Angela from Seesaw, they discussed their goals while addressing how Seesaw has evolved and continues to evolve. The initial goal of the creators of Seesaw was to have the product being used by 20 classrooms with 10 classrooms having parent involvement in Seesaw. Sharing her feelings about the enormity of this goal, Emily noted that they continually take the time to reset their goals and evaluate their progress every six months.

An important factor in their goal setting is what they have learned from the product creators, Carl and Adrian. Emily stated, "Working with a startup...you have to really set up those ambitious goals" (E. Voigtlander, interview, February 13, 2017). She further commented there are times when those goals are not fully met but feels that their focus remains constant. The success that they have so far achieved has not been a result of following a book, but they have at times sought out help from other communities that have gone through similar situations. Searching others who are willing to share their expertise is important to the success and credibility of when depending on social media as a means of strengthening and expanding your community (Malby, 2012).

Angela spoke of there being a point when the focus of the Google Plus Ambassador Community began to move away from the original goal. It started to become a sounding board and not a place for learning. Angela set out to refocus the group through a video which was created to share the goals of the community. In the article, *Constructivist Learning Environments and Defining the Online Community*, Loren Brown (2014) references online learning

communities that are teacher and student-driven. The tenets he describes also apply to online communities such as Seesaw. Brown discusses how constructivism has driven changes in the way we learn creating environments for sharing and practice. This is also the focus of Seesaw. “We wanted the space to inspire and support one another,” (A. Gadtke, interview, February 13, 2017).

Metrics

The philosophy at Seesaw regarding collecting and analyzing data is to only use metrics to investigate what they feel will provide a chance to change the company for the better. Emily noted that one area in which they do look at analytics is when investigating applicants for the Seesaw Ambassador program. When considering a teacher candidate, they use metrics to determine how often that individual logged in to Seesaw in the past month(s), how active have they been in the community, and whether they have attended PD sessions. This data heavily informs their decision on which applicants to accept into the Ambassador program based on their activity rates and the distribution of representatives from varying grade levels and over the United States and across the world.

While Seesaw does not rely as heavily on metrics as most online communities, they do monitor the quality of interactions on social media to measure the vitality of the community. Additionally, as the primary goal of the company is to reach students and improve their educational experience, Seesaw uses metrics to maintain a general idea of how many teachers are using the application, and in turn, how many students and parents are logged in. Participant activity is also monitored in terms of how many posts are added by students during a specific period of time. These analytics are used to keep a finger on the health of both the community and the Seesaw product.

Conclusion

In the past two years, Seesaw has developed from a simple consumer app named Shadow Puppet to an expansive student portfolio application and active online community used across the world. This rapid progress can be attributed to their constant evolution and attentiveness to their users' needs. Their establishment of special programs and opportunities to attract and maintain community members, along with the overarching goal of improving the educational process for teachers, parents and especially students has contributed to their rapid growth.

While Emily and Angela both note that they have been developing the Seesaw community through simply listening to their members, they have fostered an online space which exhibits the characteristics theorists describe as part of a healthy online community. Kraut and Resnick (2012) outline a variety of theories that relate to a strong community design from starting a community, bringing in new members, and motivating commitment and participation. Without consciously following these suggestions, the Seesaw community exemplifies what social science describes as a strong design.

Wenger, White and Smith (2012) describe nine orientations, tools that support the community activity, which complement each other and provide an optimal environment for growth. Seesaw's community offers all of these orientations within its framework:

Orientation	Key Indicators	Seesaw Components
Meetings	-Both face-to-face and blended -Online synchronous -Regular & well-attended -Useful outcomes -Flexibility to schedules	Meet and Greets Webinars Seesaw Chats PD in your PJ's
Open-Ended Conversations	-Multiple avenues of communication -Wealth of information, though not overwhelming	Discussion Topics Seesaw Chats Google + Groups Facebook

		Twitter Limiting notifications
Projects	-Collaboration on particular topics -Subgroups among participants	Pilot Groups Webinars PD sessions
Content	-Tools provided for users -Access to expertise -Problem Solving -PD resources -Large pool of experts	Digital Portfolios with photo, video, drawings, text, links, QR code sign-in Tools for formative assessment Authentic audience
Relationships	-Networking opportunities -Group & Whole Community Participation	Ambassador Program Whole community networking on social media Meet & Greets Seesaw Chats Webinars
Individual Participation	-Diversity of participants -Unique perspectives -Recognizing expertise of participants -development of individuals	Global nature of Ambassador program Choice of Webinar Instructors from Teacher Leaders
Community Cultivation	-Monitoring health of community -Making changes/adjustments -Active Leadership -Well-planned activities	Use of metrics Constant evolution Strong core of leaders Social Media (Google+, Twitter, Facebook) Ambassador events Email reminders to participate in events
Serving a Context	-Influencing member learning experience and community identity -Mission	Supporting Seesaw product, but working toward higher good of improving student learning and family communication

One of the main reasons for Seesaw's success thus far has been the willingness of its employees to constantly change, evolve and expand. When asked about upcoming plans for Seesaw, Emily and Andrea demonstrated that they intend on continuing their trend of perpetual change and evolution. They are working on ways to make Seesaw more accessible to less tech-savvy teachers to expand their ability to attract new members, as well as ways to further connect

external and internal communities. If Seesaw continues on this path of openness to change, listening to its members, supporting all orientations, and working toward a higher goal, it should continue its success story.

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Appendix A

Seesaw Interview Transcript

Interview Date: Monday, February 13, 2017

Length of Interview: 45:15

Interviewers: Patricia Holzman, Wendy Thompson, Jennifer Vanyi

Interviewees: Angela Gadtke, Emily Voigtlander

Interview Video Link: <http://bit.ly/2ltSsrD>

Wendy: We want to go ahead and get this started. We have about 15 questions that we want to go through and we will take them one at a time and you ladies feel free to tell us anything that you want we are ready to learn all right.

Emily: All right

Wendy: Thank you

I get to start. What is your position at Seesaw and how long have you held that position?

Either of you can start first.

Angela: Okay, I'll go first. I am Angela and I am part of the teacher success team here at Seesaw but specifically I work with our seesaw ambassadors from around the world and also support our teacher community via seesaw webinars and all of that sort of stuff but also our various groups on Google Plus, Seesaw teachers on Facebook, and a little bit of Twitter help as well. So yeah, my job is to support all of the amazing teachers out there that are getting...(Angela's phone rang). Emily go for it.

Emily: So, my name is Emily. Can you guys hear me? I am the first employee of Seesaw. I joined before seesaw was even an idea. So, at Seesaw now I work on...I manage our teacher success team so that includes two parts so that's a more community focused set of work which is like the professional development ambassador program that Angela is in charge of and then our teacher and school success which is a little bit more of a traditional customer support kind of role. So, if you email tell help at Seesaw.me you are going to get put in touch with our customer success team and that will be parents, teachers, school administrators, anybody who emails they work on answering the questions that come in through there and then I also work with our engineering team to make sure that the products that we build really meet the teachers' needs. So, that means I collect feedback from our ambassadors on Twitter, teachers on Twitter, teachers on the Facebook group, school administrators using seesaw for their schools, customer support complaints, or even feedback from folks when they come and visit our office. I work on synthesizing all of that all feedback and taking that to the engineering team to make sure that the changes that we make to Seesaw are really responsive to the needs of our teacher community

Wendy: Wow...very busy women... your turn around is really great. Whenever I put a question up or when I was having problems with signing in at the beginning of the year you guys worked

really hard to get me signed in and get our school up and running and I wanted to say thank you in person for that. So thank you a lot.

Which one of you ladies to go next?

Angela: I could go.

Emily: Oh, I see...got it...next question. (laughter). She's like, "I'm ready."

Patricia: Question # 2 It's two questions. What qualified you for that position and how does your personal experience relate to your perspective for that role?

Angela: (laughter)

Emily: Oh, that's a good question. Okay so I was not qualified for this position probably but I was the only person around and so I got it. That's one of the benefits of taking a risk on a two-person company. You end up getting to do a lot of projects that you might not even qualified for and I think that is one of those things and I've loved most about working at Seesaw is the opportunities for growth and for learning for myself personally and that has been an opportunity that I will be endlessly grateful for. Every 3 months I feel like my job has been totally different than the previous three months because Seesaw has changed so much over the past few years, the past two and a half- three years or so that I've been here. So, that has been pretty crazy and I think the thing that I've learned that has been really most important the thing that has been is the most important is really listening. I think a lot of people can decide things or make decisions but I think what is more important of all of that is really being a good listener and listening to our teacher community or students our parent community. I feel like I learn what I need to know from them just by listening.

Angela you go.

Angela: (laughter) I feel like I have the same answer. My experience is I had been a teacher for fifteen years. Two years ago when they were starting to think about Seesaw I got this email from Carl one of the co-founders saying, "Hey we are thinking of this new app would you like to learn about it and tested in your kindergarten classroom?" So, I said sure sounds amazing. So, basically that is how I got involved. Emily heard from me via the Shadow Puppet help line. I believe I emailed her, so she's like there is this kindergarten teacher in Minnesota that we should contact. So basically, that is how I was connected with Seesaw. So, I used Seesaw in my classroom for two years and just loved it every single aspect of it very passionate about it. So when they approached me for this position I didn't know if I was qualified but I knew I had a deep passion for it...for what they were doing for teachers and they were really looking for someone to just spread that Seesaw love and support all of the other teachers around the world that are that are using the products. So I think my skills are probably that I bring the teacher perspective of being in a real classroom using the product day in and day out but also from a professional development standpoint being able to work with numerous groups of teachers and have kind of the organizational skills that it takes to coordinate that. So, had I ever done a Twitter chat. "No." Have I ever done all of these things just like Emily is saying I have learned along the way but yeah.

Patricia: That's great.

Jennifer: The next question is...maybe one of you can just handle this question. Maybe you Emily since you've been there since the Inception of the company. What's the very brief history of how Seesaw got started?

Emily: Yes, sure I'll try to do the super fast version so we can get to the rest of the questions. So, Seesaw...the first app we developed was this app called Shadow Puppet which was a photo video storytelling tool. So, you could create like you know slideshow photos and then you could

narrate on top of that. We launched that. The idea was just that it was just a general consumer app like photo app were super super popular at the time that we launched and so we were like great let's do that. Then it turned out the people who cared most about shadow puppet were teachers. So, I was like, basically they were emailing to ask questions or to complain about stuff that we broke or ask for future improvements so I was just responding to all of them by email saying like oh cool okay thanks and then they would send videos of the super cute stuff their students were doing and we were like all. "That's so cute. We love it yeah." So, basically we were like ok let's listen to what these teachers are telling us and figure out an idea for something new that we could build. What we heard from them was we love making these videos but it's really hard to share them with families or like we love making stuff on the iPads but then it's just trapped on the iPad and there's no way for me as a teacher to keep it organized or even know who made what and we were like ok that seems like a problem we can solve. So, Carl and Adrian have worked on like... you know...had experience working on things like Google Calendar and Picasa all of these apps that are used by lots and lots of people to stay organized and communicate with each other. So, we kind of took those experiences from things that they had worked on...and what we were hearing from teachers to create the first version which was called...it was called P2. (Laughing) So we worked with like 10 or so classrooms including Angela's classroom to test the very first version and they were like the way you have students login is nightmare. This is broken. This is broken. We want to add videos. We want to add voice recordings. They had all these great suggestions for us so over a period of like three months we kind of worked on incorporating all of those in and at that time it was just five people the two co-founders, me, and then two other engineers. We launched the first version in January of 2015, Angela?

Angela: Yes, 2015

Emily: and then it was kind of like...it has kind of been like off to the races since then. I think we like really created something that was really useful and pretty immediately to a lot of teachers and then it just started growing and growing and growing and we're like oh cool amazing we get tons and tons of feedback of what we're doing wrong and right and just working on listening and making Seesaw better and better over time and expanding two more platforms before we only had iOS and we were like okay let's build it on the web and then Android, and Kindle it's like this is broken on the web so we have to circle back and fix it and really just trying to pretty quickly make Seesaw better and better.

Jennifer: That's great.

Emily: Thank you.

Wendy: You are doing a great job.

Emily: Thank you.

Wendy: Every time you guys do an update there is something that you don't even think about...something I would like to have and that's the new update. you were like Oh My God, this is so good like that translation app. I love the translation.

Emily: Oh good...I am so happy to hear that.

I am also very happy about that feature. I think it really is super useful. What I think is super cool about some of the new features that we have been focusing on let's take the things that computers are really good at...like computers are really good at translating because they can just read it and detect the language and tell you the translation. It's not going to be a perfect translation but they

are much faster at translating than a teacher right. so let's figure out what computers are good at what helps Seesaw do those and the things that humans are good at let's make it easier for humans to do (giggle). and so, that is one thing that I think is really cool about technology especially in the classroom. There's some stuff that computers are just better at and there's some stuff that computer is are definitely not and let's keep... let's make one easier and keep one for teachers and students to do themselves.

Wendy: Well, you just told us a little bit about the history and how it got started. Our next question was what was the original purpose set forth when Seesaw was founded but I think you kind of answered that for us. So, I'm just going to skip down to...In your opinion what makes SeeSaw an exemplar among online communities for educators?

Angela: That's a good question.

Emily: I'll do a little answer and then Angela can.

Angela: Yep

Emily: Okay so I think one of things that is so great about our community is the sort of like..the diversity and like the creativity of the educators who are part of the community. There are teachers from like almost every country in the world across every grade level across every subject matter who are sharing these incredible ideas... so creative... just so transformative and I love how generous they are with their contributions and they're just so open and happy to help others and I think that we try hard to make sure that the community is a positive place to be and really like a place for sharing ideas and getting inspired and I know Angela has done so much amazing stuff to continue to support teachers in that. I think that creativity and openness and positivity of the community is just like... I login into Facebook and Twitter every day and I'm just like these are incredible people. We are so lucky. So, I think that's one thing that really stands out to me for sure. What about you Angela?

Angela: Yeah, I know you did a good job there, Emily. I think part of the energy from the community is it reflection of the products because when I was first experiencing Seesaw in and my classroom I was like... "Oh My God! Gosh!" all of the things that I was able to do with it I literally had this feeling of if I don't share this with someone else, like I am a bad teacher. You know keeping this thing under wraps is not ok. You know it is not ok to not share this great tool. So, I just felt this need to share and to make other people's lives easier and change their classrooms super easily and cool. So, it sounds a little bit crazy but I think that's also reflected in our group because I think teachers are really excited with the product and they want to share because they thought of so many different ways to use it and so many different ways that they can impact their classroom. It's not just like oh I only use it for this, or I only use it for this, or oh I only used for this purpose and I think that's part of the strength the community there are so many different perspectives coming in so many different grade levels so many teachers from around the world and using it. I think that's reflected in the product but also the original goal of the project is really sharing learning. So, they're doing that with the platform but they're also doing that via our teacher community. So, they're sharing, they're giving comments and feedback all that... just excited. I think it lends itself to the philosophy of Seesaw in general.

Emily: I think one thing that when we started with the product was like okay how do we help showcase learning in all of its forms not just the pencil and paper or not just these one-dimensional things that can be sent home in a Friday folder. It was really about capturing everything like everything that's happening as part of the educational experience and I mean like when we were thinking about the things that stuck out to us as part of our elementary school education like it was rarely the thing that was written down on a piece of paper but really much

more about the experiences that happened like in group work in the classroom or more like these projects or like the things we learned about how to communicate with each other because of being in that classroom dynamic and I think we really wanted to unlock that for teachers because...and create a way that was easy to share that with the people who care most about that, the students and their families. So I think that has really carried over into the community like Angela said and think it also reinforces everything we're doing on the product side because we look at the...every Monday as a team Angela and I share our favorite moments from the week that have happened in our teacher community and everyone on the team gets to participate and see those and that really helps them do their jobs better too because they know they have in their minds the people they are working for and designing for and improving things for and so the things that you guys share also get head back into the work that we do here on the team.

Patricia: Thank you. What tools do you think sets Seesaw apart from other online communities for educators?

Angela: Can you say that again?

Patricia: Sure. What features and or tools do you think sets Seesaw apart from other online communities for educators?

Emily: Hmm...That's a good question. I mean I think we use a lot of tools that anybody could use like we use Google Groups, we Facebook groups, we use Twitter chats. I think... I mean we do have somethings like the ambassador program which is basically a ton of extra professional development that teachers like maybe you guys I know Wendy is an ambassador I'm not sure if you guys are too can participate in so they get extra training to learn how to spread the word about Seesaw. I think that's one thing that's one thing that's a little bit unique. We also do like a ton of... we have our PD in your PJ's program which is where we take sort of star teachers from our community and they share how they're using seesaw in their classrooms and give teachers like real life in the classroom tips about how to use seesaw and I think that's another thing that we do. I mean really it came out of seeing all this stuff the teachers were like doing okay awesome like I... Emily... because I'm not a teacher in the classroom would be like I don't know the right way to use see saw in 5th grade necessarily. Like I could guess but why not have Kira come and tell us exactly how he's doing in her classroom. She's going to be better at it. So, let's give people a platform to like show off their strengths and really like help other people.

Angela: I think the other the other part too that is a little bit different is that...we actually interact with that community too on various platforms. So, like there's other bigger communities that no one really necessarily from that company necessarily interacts with them.

Emily: That's a good point.

Angela: So I think that makes us different too. You know we have the private ambassador community. You know I'm always responding to things in there so is Emily and other members of the Seesaw team but also the Seesaw teachers Facebook group I'm responding if..if other community members are not responding... other teachers... or just to clarify things so I think that's also very different from actually other communities that I'm involved in. It seems much more of like kind of a two-way or not even a two-way multiple avenues of communication rather than just like... I'm going to shove this stuff out at you... it's kind of what I've seen in other spots potentially that there isn't as much feedback amongst the members but also directly with people that actually work in the company.

Jennifer: That's a good point for sure. That's something you don't see in many communities. You guys exhibit it greatly.

Now the next question I think you could probably answer in one word and I know the answer. Do you feel you have been succeeding in the goals that you set forth from the beginning?

Emily & Angela: (laughter)

Emily: I think we have but you know it's pretty interesting because when we started we were like... I was like the goal that Carl and Adrian set was like you need to get 20 classrooms using Seesaw and 10 of those need to have parents using seesaw.

Angela: (laughter)

Emily: and I was like... No, how can I do it? So, I think for each of the times we reset the goals based on the progress that we've made... we kind of do it like every six months. Every time there's a new goal I think Angela and I are both just like... even if we're setting it for ourselves...what are we...are we crazy? I think that's one of the things that we've kind of taken from working with Carl and Adrian. Working at a startup is like you have to really set up those ambitious goals and like we hustle to try to get them and sometimes we don't hit them exactly but I think generally the trajectory we've been really grateful and also a lot of hard work to kind of get to the point where we are and I think our hope is to continue to you know grow our community and make it an even greater place to learn how to use seesaw but also just like learn how to be a better teacher that uses technology in your classroom because we really think that it has a big impact on the students and that's really what motivates all of us I think.

Jennifer: That's great.

Emily: Angela, do you have a different answer?

Angela: You did a great job.

Wendy: I think you girls do a great job too. So, one of the things we need to understand is what obstacles have you encountered with your online community and how did you overcome them?

Emily: That's a good question. Angela, I don't know. Do you want to answer or do you want me to take it?

Angela: I mean...I have one answer like one thing that comes to mind right off the bat. So, for example are Google Plus community is only for ambassadors and as we kind of grow the Ambassador program more and more and more people are applying to get into that group so last summer... basically there was this kind of this little shift a little bit in that group more as kind of becoming like a sounding board. It was kind of starting to move towards like the sounding board of I have a basic question I'm going to put it here and let's see who answers it the fastest type of thing. So, we didn't want it to be that. We didn't want it to be we're going to post basic questions here. We wanted it to be a space to inspire and support one another and have ambassadors sharing. Wow this was really awesome in my classroom today. So to kind of shift focus a little bit was like what you do in your classroom. What I would do in my classroom would be talk about norms for the group or goals that we that we have for the group. So everyone is kind of on the same page so I created just a little... I don't know a little video that was kind of just like welcome to this Google Plus community. Here are our goals that we set forth in here and just be aware of this these are the best avenues to take if you have basic questions and that kind of just reset the tone of the group a little bit and not to say it didn't get out of hand or whatever but I think as we continue to grow that was something that we wanted to address more specifically so that people were now... oh my gosh I'm getting you know 200 notifications from this group type of thing. So, I guess that's a very specific example that comes to mind.

Emily: Yes, I think that is an example of a larger trend that we've had to deal with. As the Seesaw community has grown, we've had to change the way we do things. It could be a small thing like when we first started the Ambassador program and we only had a few people in it. Really it started with 3 teachers and Angela was one of those. And you know, if they needed something, they would email me directly and I would email t-shirts in bulk and mail out t-shirts one by one. It got to the point that we had like 100 ambassadors and spent like 15 hours a week just mailing t-shirts to ambassadors and postcards and pens and stickers. So, like every step of growth has also had challenges associated with that in terms of organizing more people, being in touch with more people, sending more swag. What do we do about that? All of those logistics things, we've had to... I mean I don't know the answer to any of that stuff. Angela and I have to figure it out by googling and testing things out and trying to figure out a plan that supports the new level and the new people in the community so we can continue to make it feel personal and fun and that everyone is getting something out of it. And figuring how to change the way we run all the community efforts of the company to stay on track with the amount of people who want to participate in it has been the greatest challenge. It just manifests itself in lots of different ways. For example, we have an Ambassador website where you can create a bio and then other people can search by zip code and find you. It had so much traffic when we had a new round of Ambassadors that it basically took my WordPress website down. And I had to figure out how to fix this thing. And there are these problems where there's not a clear... there's not a road map to follow; or like this is how you do a community 101. We're figuring it out all on the fly, pretty much. And I'm trying to ask people who have been there before for advice, but it does definitely feel like pretty new territory and we have to problem solve pretty quickly and persevere through some bad, "oh, we made the wrong choice, we have to get ourselves out" sometimes. But the infrastructure stuff is really bad.

Patricia: I think the next question was kind-of answered, but I'll throw it out there in case there's anything you wanted to add. What kind of adaptations has the community gone through its inception to meet the needs of its members? I think little-by-little, you've been answering that question all along. Is there anything else you'd like to add to that?

Emily: Yeah, I think it's still a very much evolving thing, Angela and I were just talking the other day about new plans for the next round of Ambassador onboarding so that people can get better training at a better pace that works for them. We changed how we structured training; how we send out swag; how people can request it; how to set norms for the groups so people aren't overwhelmed with their notifications. Basically, it's a lot of little things that we've had to tweak and change and I think the most important part, I guess, is probably just being like basically waking up thinking, Yep, this is probably going to change today. What worked yesterday is probably not going to work today. Because we have new people and more people means more complications. Angela and I are always like, "gotta redo that piece, gotta circle back and fix that". It's not bad. For a while it felt like we made a mistake, like we didn't plan this well enough the first time. It's not bad, it's just an evolution and it's an evolution of our learning. I think having a positive attitude and being open to change is one of the reasons why we've been able to make the community a good place to be for hopefully most of the people who come to visit it.

Angela: Yeah, and I think one of the challenges is too that we are very conscious of the fact that we want it to feel like a community and we really value the teacher communities, so we are always thinking of ways to make everyone who's a part of that community have their voice be heard, or take their input or even looking at ways people can meet face-to-face. So that's where we even want to grow; to create this community where they kind-of have that intimacy; where

they feel, "oh, I've connected with this person". And how do you do that so, you know, that type of thing. So, we're constantly thinking of different ideas to support that too.

Jen: One big thing we wanted to ask about too are in terms of metrics, what do you use to analyze your growth and analyze how your community is performing. In a technology sense, what kind of metrics do you employ?

Emily: Yeah, that's a good question. It varies based on the goal we are measuring. We try not to measure metrics for metrics sake. We try to measure things that will change our behavior. For example, we would try to measure how many people applied to be an Ambassador in this round? How many of those people are qualified by certain standards? Have they logged into Seesaw in the past month? And we would try to like use that as one of our measures. How many qualified applicants did we get? How many attended our training? How many people are we losing in each step of the process? And we will typically set the goals on the number of ambassadors, the distribution of countries we are going for, the grade levels that we are going for. That's one way. Another way is a lot about not as much about the quantity, but about the quality of the interactions that are happening on Twitter or Facebook. Does it feel like they are really helping each other and really connecting? I think that is... we don't really measure that we got 30 new tweets today, but really more as, is there life in this community and are people still coming back. We try to put activities on the marketing calendar; like professional development, or Seesaw chat or Ambassador training or reminders to put different stuff to remind people to come check us out; hang out. We want to be friends with you and try and make sure we just have those regular touchpoints. And so, and then of course, the reason we feel the community is so important is because if they're engaged in our community, then they are probably engaged with using Seesaw in their classroom. As I mentioned, our main goal is really to have an impact on students and families. So, the more teachers we can get excited, the more students we can reach. So, across the whole company we measure how many teachers are using Seesaw each month, and how many students and how many teachers are checking Seesaw and how many posts are being added by students. So, we measure those too and that's kind-of something that the whole company is paying attention to, but it's definitely supported by all the things we do on the community side of things.

Wendy: I just wanted to say, from my point, I know the webinars, the freedom to do them when I want to.. the point that if I miss one, I know I'm going to get an email to me, get a link where I can go back and do it on my own time. It's a really nice way to do the professional development and still not overburden people with the time and place aspect. And that was one of the big things to me about the community as a whole. We wanted to ask about the Seesaw Ambassador program. I love it. I think it's a success, but what do you guys think about it?

Emily: As with everything we do, it's an evolution of sure. When we first came up with the idea for the program, it was me and Karl. This was before Angela joined and we were like, "we want an Ambassador in every state and I was like, wow this is hard. I think we've met and exceeded that goal. So, I think it's been successful, but what I think is still one of the most amazing things about this program is like, how generous community members are with their time and they want to come to the professional development we were hosting. And that they are excited to learn about Seesaw, honestly it feels like such an honor. We're like, what, they all want to come? We are just so humbled by that enthusiasm and how do we support that, how do we keep, you know, keep adding to that fire and appreciate their presence and their contributions and honestly, this really helps everyone at the company do their job better, your participation and our community through the Ambassador group and social. So, we really want to make sure that we continue to

stay open and we participate and engage with that. You know, anytime we have a question, I just go, "Okay let's just ask some Ambassadors." And that's a huge asset, for the whole company across every single role here.

Angela: I think what's exciting from my perspective from dealing specifically with the Ambassadors as they are applying and everything, is seeing the impact that you're having around the world. So, that was exciting to just, you know, we had Ambassadors from all over the world apply to join us this round. So, as Emily was saying, just working with a product that has such a community on a global scale is really exciting.

Patricia: Is there anything new that Seesaw is planning to incorporate in the near future for its members that you want to share?

Emily: That's a good question. (Laughing) We have a lot of secrets we can't share yet. Let's see, I think one of the things we've noticed kind-of like a broader trend is we've definitely, there are so many teachers using Seesaw who are really tech savvy and really excited and really like down to test something out in their classroom and like willing to take risks. And that's amazing, but I think we are starting to get more teachers who are more nervous and scared because they're hearing about the transformative effect that other teachers have had in their classroom and they're like, okay, I'm not really a tech person, but I'll give it a try if you say so. And, the challenge that we're having now is that the original version of Seesaw was designed for the tech savvy teacher who was willing to give us the time to really learn how to use it. And I think what we're hoping to do over the next few months is make Seesaw easier to use for a brand-new teacher. So, they can have a faster, less stressful experience of starting to use Seesaw, getting their class set up, getting it set up in their classroom; all that kind of stuff. And I think that we're not going to hit a wall; that we've saturated all the tech savvy teachers. And they are like, "we love Seesaw" and we're like but what all the rest of you guys? So, that's what we're going to be focusing on, figure out ways Seesaw can be easier, more simple, more straightforward for all new teachers.

Angela: And I think you know, on a community side too, thinking of ways to better connect our community with one another as well. I don't want to go into too many details...

Emily: Yeah, I think that's a great teaser. Because we have so many great community members and we want to really figure out more ways for them to connect with each other more and get to that next level of connection because that's what Angela and I have gotten to experience in getting to know you, Wendy. It's amazing what a great experience it is to have those connections, even with people you would have never met otherwise and you have that connections. How do we make more people feel what Angela and I feel?

Wendy: I like the way you do the Meet and Greets. You get to see the names online and when you do the Twitter chats and in the Ambassador group. But when you actually go to a Meet and Greet and you get to shake the hand of the person you've been following, it's a really nice aspect. I like that in-person kind of contact.

Angela: Well, stay tuned, Wendy. (Laughing)

Jen: Yes, so this, again, could just be a short answer but I know it probably is hard, because you have so much to be proud of; but if you could think of what makes you the proudest about what you've done with Seesaw and its work, what are you most proud of?

Emily: Um, that's hard. I think, um, I mean I think for me is it's just, I don't think I would have ever imagined I'd work on something that was having such a real, meaningful impact on kid's educational experience. I mean, that's their life. I mean, school is everything really and I have an impact on that and the way they communicate with their family. And that's like, oh my gosh, that's amazing. I just love seeing the things that students are able to create using the tools I

helped build and part of that is because of the amazing community too. It's like all tied together for me in this beautiful ecosystem of code and community and I think that that even you know as a teacher you have an impact maybe on 30 students a year and for me, my work is in front of all these students every day and I'm like, whoa, I can't even believe it sometimes.

Angela: Oh my gosh, okay, so I'm forgetting part of the question but what am I most proud of?

Jen: Basically, that's it.

Angela: That's hard. I would say, hopefully creating a resource for teachers where they feel they can come and get the information they need to either feel empowered themselves or feel empowered to empower their students. Whether that means they are coming to a PD they feel super useful or getting advice from other teachers or me bringing in a teacher I feel is doing an amazing job to kind of elevate them so they can share their voice with a larger group of people as well. One of the things I think is amazing is everyone talking about Seesaw, we're not paying them to do that. When they're really excited, it's because they love the product. So, I think just having that community where everyone can shine and also spread that energy to everyone they work with so like Wendy was saying, have that opportunity to come and grab what they need but also spread it around as well. I don't know if I answered that right.

Jen: That was great.

Wendy: I think that what you ladies do, is not just meaningful to one or two people, but you really have touched the lives of so many people and I applaud you for it and I thank you every day for your product. My kids love it, I love it, many parents love it. When you talk about the human connection, personal connections, you talk about the ability for my students who are nonverbal for a large part to share with family exactly what they do throughout the day. It is just so meaningful. And so, a product like yours is something I've never had... ever dreamed of available to me. And now it's something that I can't see my day going without so, I thank you again. I thank you for taking the time to talk to the 3 of us and get us all excited about the future of Seesaw and where it's heading next and I just want to say if you need me, I'm here!

Angela: Wendy, we love you!

Emily: Yeah, thank you so much. It was really great to get to talk to you and get to know you. Sorry we don't have 3 people to bring to the conversation. It's really just the 2 of us.

Wendy: Just the thought of the 2 of you doing all that. Because I know how much goes on in just one unit. I've seen all the growth over this past year. I think it's amazing.

Emily: Angela and I spend a lot of time on the internet. I think our husbands are like, "Are you Seesawing again?". It's just so hard to stay away because it's such a positive and great place to be. Which I feel that we really need. Everybody needs that.

Jen: For sure.

Wendy: Absolutely. OK ladies, so I guess we'll sign off now so you can go ahead with your busy days.

Emily: Thank you so much. Alright you guys, good luck on your project.

Patricia: Thank you so much.

Wendy: Thank you. Bye.

Appendix B

Communication Regarding Access to Metric Dashboards



Hi, Again on behalf of the group, a BIG Thank you from all of us for the time and information that you and Emily shared with us. We also forgot to ask if it would be possible to gain screenshots of your administrator's dashboard to include in our discussion of how you apply metrics. We disguise all identifiable information to keep everything confidential. Sorry, for the delay but I've been out with the flu since Tuesday and just got back on my feet.

Feb 16 Sent



Hi Wendy,

I'll talk to Emily about that. My first response is probably not likely, we really try and protect that info, however I'll chat with her.

Feb 16



Thanks, for trying. If it helps in the decision, we would only use the images in the official paper turned in to our professor and remove those images before publishing.

Feb 16 Sent

There was no further response.