

Key Takeaways & Possible Solutions

Below is a list of the key takeaways from a range of user interviews conducted with Core Contributors in October 2023. The lightbulb emoji 💡 represents an idea or possible solution:

1. When looking for projects to work on, Core Contributors rely mainly on **Working Group Meetings**, **Confluence**, and **Slack** (in that order) to see where they can lend a hand
2. **Meeting notes** from Working Group Meetings are useful for Core Contributors who miss a meeting, or can't attend because of their timezone
 - 💡 Ensure recordings of meetings are added to the meeting notes
 - 💡 Include a list of meeting outcomes in the meeting notes
 - 💡 Investigate whether there is an open source alternative to *Zoom Notes* or *Otter.ai* to automate the creation of meeting notes (see the “automated summary” [on this page](#) from the Core Contributor Working Group)
3. Core Contributors sometimes miss Working Group Meetings because they are not aware (or forget) that they are taking place
 - 💡 Post **meeting reminders** on the relevant Slack Channels the day before the meeting, preferably with a link to the meeting agenda
4. The majority of Core Contributors interviewed **don't plan** their contributions in advance, and tend to work on things as they pop up
5. Whilst Core Contributors agree that collaboration is always beneficial, most already seem to be getting **enough collaboration** from their interactions in Working Group Meetings, on Slack, and in Confluence
6. Core Contributors seem to use communication channels in the following ways:
 - **Slack** for direct messages, and time-sensitive questions
 - **Public Slack Channels** for announcements and general information
 - **Confluence** for in-context conversations on project specifications and other documents
 - **Figma comments** for in-context feedback on designs
 - Very few Core Contributors follow activity on the **Forum**

7. A number of Core Contributors find the number of **communication channels** used throughout the community overwhelming (Confluence, the Forum, Github, Slack, Figma comments...)
 - 💡 Consider whether we should limit the number of communication channels we use (should Core Contributors be using both Confluence and the Forum?)
 - 💡 Add a resource listing which communication channels to use for each use case (perhaps as a page within the [Core Contributor space](#) in Confluence, and/or as a bookmark on each Working Group Slack Channel). Alternatively, expand upon the [Community Social Tools](#) page in Confluence and direct Core Contributors to it
 - 💡 Use a standard format for all Working Group “cover pages” in Confluence so that they may become a “source of truth” for Working Groups ([see example](#)). Ensure they include the following information (at the least):
 - Link to join the Working Group’s Slack channel(s)
 - Link to Working Group issues in Github, eg. [LTI items on roadmap](#)
 - Links to relevant Forum categories, eg. [Data Working Group post](#)
 - Encourage users to categorize and tag posts correctly
8. While most Core Contributors agree that the **forum** is good because it is asynchronous and public, they seldom visit it or post on it
 - 💡 Confirm whether we should continue to use the [Core Contributor space in the forum](#), or if it should be replaced by one of the other communication channels used in the community (Confluence?)
 - 💡 If we choose to keep using the forum, define what type of communication should take place there, and determine how to encourage Core Contributors to visit it more regularly
9. Very few Core Contributors follow the **2-week sprint schedule**. Some feel it’s more geared towards developers than other types of Core Contributors
 - 💡 Consider doing away with the concept of a Core Contributor sprint altogether
 - 💡 Rather than a “sprint”, view Core Contributor work as “work done within a calendar month”. Send out the Listaflow questionnaire on a **monthly basis** instead of biweekly, and only post the report and sprint retro once a month (this should cut admin in half)
10. Although lately we’ve only had a 25% completion rate, most of the Core Contributors who were interviewed complete the **Listaflow questionnaire**, but most don’t really understand what its purpose is. Some Core Contributors skip the questionnaire as they don’t think their responses will be valuable to the community (especially if they do the same work every sprint, and thus have the same answers every sprint)
 - 💡 Determine what goals the Listaflow questionnaire hopes to achieve

- 💡 Communicate these goals to Core Contributors to encourage them to complete the questionnaire each sprint
 - 💡 Only ask Core Contributors to fill in the sprint questionnaire once a month, to avoid additional meta work
11. Very few Core Contributors know what the **difference** is between the "Contributors Meetup Async Update" and the "Contributor Sprint Retro"
- 💡 Consider merging these reports into one
12. Some Core Contributors don't see the "**Contributors Meetup Async Update**" and the "**Contributor Sprint Retro**" because they seldom check the forum
- 💡 Determine whether there is a better place to post these reports
 - 💡 Whenever reports are posted, send Core Contributors a link via email, and/or on the various Working Group Slack Channels (if Core Contributors have not enabled forum alerts, they won't be notified when there is a new post)
13. Core Contributors agree that *some* of the information on the async update and sprint retro is **interesting/useful**, but not all of it
- 💡 Determine the goal of the async update and sprint retro
 - 💡 Remove any content that does not align with that goal, or that is already covered in other places (like in the meeting notes on Confluence)
14. **At most, Core Contributors scan** the async update and sprint retro. Nobody reads through the reports
- 💡 Make the reports more enticing to read (like a magazine article, with images, graphs etc., and important sections highlighted at the top)
 - 💡 Make the reports shorter and easier to digest
 - 💡 Consider changing the report to a monthly cadence (like a news wrap-up)
15. Sometimes, Core Contributors find it **difficult to find enough work** to fill their hours
- 💡 Think of ideas on how to highlight the "Blockers or Calls/offers for help" section of the async update, or whether it should be moved / repeated elsewhere
16. It is not always clear who is responsible for giving approval for a certain body of work. This makes it difficult for Core Contributors to make progress on certain projects
- 💡 Create a procedure outlining how Core Contributors should go about getting reviews and approvals

- 💡 Investigate whether approval responsibilities could be delegated across the community more

17. Some of the things Core Contributors **like most** about being a Core Contributor include:

- Having a say in the direction of the Open edX Project
- Having the autonomy to help improve the project without being blocked by too much red tape
- Working with knowledgeable, kind, and enthusiastic people from all over the world

18. Other issues mentioned:

- The language we use across the community is not always very inclusive, especially for non-technical users
- It's difficult to identify potential overlaps between projects and avoid duplication of efforts
- Core Contributors aren't always aware of the skills that other Core Contributors have (i.e. how they could contribute to a particular project)
- Sometimes people attend working group meetings, but don't contribute much during or after meetings
 - 💡 Highlight the fact that Working Group meetings are intended to be collaborative, and that Core Contributors should try to get involved
 - 💡 Working Group Leads and Sub-leads can try to increase involvement by encouraging group members to volunteer for tasks
- Some people agree to be Core Contributors but then don't ever fulfill any of their hours
 - 💡 Determine whether we should follow up with these Core Contributors to find out if there is anything we could do to help increase the number of hours they are able to contribute
 - 💡 Consider whether it would encourage Core Contributors to fulfill their hours if we displayed the number of hours each Core Contributor contributed in the previous sprint in the async update / sprint retro