



The digital lockdown: escape through community

Scenario Description and Roadmap

Context of the story

A small eco-friendly startup producing solid shampoo and conditioner bars is struggling to survive in the digital age. Their product is great, but their online presence is weak, customer engagement is almost non-existent, and sales are flatlining. In a last-ditch effort to save the company, the quirky CEO hires a team of young digital consultants (the players) and locks them in the office with a message: "Help us build a real online community or stay locked in here forever."

Targeted at young entrepreneurs, digital marketing students, and youth aged 16–29, the activity challenges players to solve a series of interconnected tasks related to online community building. Each step unlocks the next, moving them closer to crafting a working strategy for digital engagement. Their success is measured not just by escaping, but by demonstrating that they understand the foundations of community-based branding and marketing.



Global explanation

This escape room takes participants through a structured, story-driven sequence of puzzles, each one unlocking a new phase of knowledge and strategic insight related to online community development. The scenario uses real-world-inspired tools – fake analytics, social media mock-ups, influencer outreach, and platform mapping. The game progresses through stages: first understanding the company's weak points, then uncovering best practices in digital engagement, and finally applying the knowledge by building a mini strategy.

Each task provides either a password, QR code, or hidden clue that leads to the next challenge. Only when the final strategy meets defined expectations does the team “earn” the CEO's approval and “unlock” the exit.

Each phase is validated by the Game Master (CEO character), who checks if the group has successfully completed the task before providing the next clue or resource.



Roadmap

Phase A - Where are we going wrong?

Step A.1 - Introduction and briefing

Before launching the activity, the Game Master should provide a clear introduction to reduce initial uncertainty and help participants orient themselves around the more abstract concepts they will be working with during the game:

- What is an online community? Why is it essential for a sustainable business?
- The challenges in the game do not have a single correct answer, but require interpretation, discussion, and teamwork;
- The game logic follows a clear sequence: diagnosis → understanding → solution.

Sample introduction: “In this game, you will work as digital consultants for a struggling start-up. The challenges do not have one single correct answer – what matters is how you think, how you discuss, and how you reach decisions together. The game follows the logic of diagnosis → understanding → solution, so pay attention not only to the clues, but also to the meaning behind them.”

Step A.2 – First diagnosis

Participants receive a sealed envelope (or printed document) containing a dramatic letter from the CEO outlining the situation. The letter sets the tone and introduces the core mission: to rescue the struggling brand by building a strong online community.



After reading the CEO's dramatic letter, participants scan the QR code at the bottom. The QR leads to a brief cryptic text titled "Echoes in the Briefing", which reads: "You've already been told everything you need. The launch was clean. The mission was clear. What's the number that keeps repeating?"

Participants must interpret this message in connection with the CEO's letter. The correct solution is a two-digit number, derived from repeated elements or patterns within the CEO's message.

To unlock the next resource – the social media analytics report – participants must provide this number to the Game Master.

Correct answer: "00" (Link to the letter: "Engagement is zero. Sales – just as bad." → 0, 0)

✓ Unlocks: Access to the analytics report (the game host gives it to them once the riddle is solved) – "1.2. Phase A - Fake analytics report"

Step A.3 – Data analysis challenge

Participants analyse a fake social media performance report: poor engagement rates, platform mismatch, content with no clear strategy. A word is formed from the first letters of each sentence, and this is the password: "MissingTrust".

✓ Unlocks: A sealed folder titled "What Our Customers Say" – „2.1. Phase B - Fake customer feedback“



Phase B – Discovery: What does the community want?

Step B.1 – Customer feedback decoding

Inside the feedback folder are printed cards social media comments. Some express frustration, others show curiosity or enthusiasm. Each message appears self-contained – but when arranged in the correct order (1 to 6), the first letter of each message reveals a hidden word: “Engage”.

Participants must:

- Carefully read and compare the tone and themes of each comment
- Recognise the underlying structure of the puzzle
- Arrange all messages in the correct sequence
- Extract the first letter of each to form the code

✓ Unlocks: Puzzle board – “Who are we talking to?” - „2.2. Phase B - Audience persona and social media platforms cards“

Step B.2 – Platform match puzzle

Participants solve a matching exercise: target groups (e.g. eco-aware students, working mums, fitness enthusiasts) with the right social platforms. Correct answers lead to an envelope labelled “From An Influencer...”



✓ **Correct logical matches:**

Target Group	Platform
Eco-aware students	TikTok
Busy working mums	Facebook
Fitness & wellness enthusiasts	Instagram
DIY & home décor hobbyists	Pinterest
Sustainability-focused professionals	LinkedIn

✓ **Unlocks:** A email from an influencer with missing hashtag – „2.3. Phase B - Influencer message with missing hashtag“

Step B.3 – Influencer collaboration message

Participants receive a handwritten letter from a fictional influencer. The message is supportive and reflective of the brand’s values – but one key element is missing: the closing hashtag.

At the bottom of the message is a QR code that, when scanned, leads to three possible hashtag options. Only one of them completes the message in a way that aligns with the influencer’s tone and mission.

Proposed choices:

- #LeadWithHype
- #LeadWithDiscounts
- ✓ #LeadWithValues (correct)



Participants must reflect on the influencer's intent and select the correct hashtag. When they give the correct answer to the Game Master (CEO), they receive the final envelope.

✓ Unlocks: Final task – build a community strategy – „3.1. Phase C - Strategy template“

Phase C – Creation: The strategy that sets you free

Step C.1 – Drafting the community strategy

Using all previous insights, participants create a short online community plan including:

- Chosen target audience(s)
- Preferred platform(s)
- Types of content (educational, behind-the-scenes, UGC)
- Engagement mechanisms (polls, comment campaigns, challenges)
- Tone of voice and brand values
- A basic feedback/response approach

The Game Master provides a printed or handwritten template to guide this step. (While it could be written in advance on a board, we recommend giving it on paper to keep it hidden until this phase begins.)

Participants may complete a printed template or summarise their answers out loud. Creativity is welcome, but all areas should be addressed clearly.

✓ Unlocks: Presentation strategy to the CEO



Step C.2 – Approval & Escape

The Game Master (playing the role of the CEO) checks that the strategy meets at least 3 of 5 success criteria:

- Clearly defined target audience
- Relevant platforms selected
- Realistic engagement ideas
- Recognition of challenges (e.g., negative feedback)
- Strategic alignment with brand values
- If successful, the “CEO” announces approval and provides the code or key to unlock the room.

✓ Game ends successfully – participants escape

Phase D – Debrief and Reflection

A guided debrief lets participants reflect on:

- The key skills they used
- Lessons about engagement, inclusion, and digital community dynamics
- How they would apply these skills in real-world entrepreneurship

Participants fill out a feedback form and discuss how they’d adapt the strategy for another type of product or audience.



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