



The digital lockdown: escape through community

Trainer's guide

Learning outcomes

The main topic

(Digital skill, job, entrepreneurship skill)

Online Community Building – A digital and entrepreneurship skill focused on growing engaged online audiences around products, services, or shared values.

Pedagogical objectives

- Participants will understand the role of online communities in business growth.
- Participants will explore practical strategies for engaging online audiences.
- Participants will identify challenges in digital communication and how to overcome them.
- Participants will practise team collaboration, creativity, and strategic thinking.
- Participants will create a basic plan for building a digital community.



Frame

Type

Physical escape room using printed documents, clues, and light digital interaction.

Timeframe

45–60 minutes total (35–45 min gameplay + briefing & debriefing)

Participants

Minimum: 3

Maximum: 6

Topics

Entrepreneurship, digital marketing, online engagement, youth innovation

Skills required

Game Master

- Ability to guide participants and provide hints
- Understanding of basic digital marketing and community-building concepts.

Participant

- Basic familiarity with social media and communication
- No advanced prior knowledge required.



Game Master's role

The Game Master acts as the quirky CEO of a struggling startup. They welcome participants, present the scenario (the players are digital consultants “locked” in the office), and monitor progress throughout.

They:

- Supervise the experience and give hints if participants are stuck.
- Rely on guiding questions rather than direct answers, particularly when participants are working on conceptual challenges.
- Role-play the CEO during the introduction and finale.
- Confirm the final community strategy and announce the “escape”.
- Facilitate the debrief, helping participants reflect on their learning.



Inclusivity check

To ensure this escape game is inclusive and accessible for participants with learning disorders or disabilities, consider the following key elements:

- ✓ **Physical accessibility:** Ensure the venue is wheelchair accessible and that all the necessary items are reachable (not too high or far to access).
- ✓ **Visual and auditory support:** Ensure that the materials use large print, high contrast, or digital formats compatible with screen readers. If videos are involved, provide subtitles or interpretation.
- ✓ **Simple and clear instructions:** Use clear, concise language and visuals. Avoid complex wording to support participants with learning disorders.
- ✓ **Flexible participation:** Offer varied roles that cater to different strengths, allowing participants to choose tasks that suit their abilities and foster responsibility without becoming overwhelming.
- ✓ **Sensory considerations:** Avoid sensory triggers like loud noises or flashing lights. Provide a quiet space for participants needing breaks to refocus.
- ✓ **Support and adjustments:** Be ready to offer extra assistance, specific hints and guidance or tailored support based on individual needs.
- ✓ **Feedback loop:** Collect feedback from participants to continuously improve adaptability, accessibility and inclusivity.



Hints and solutions

Phase A

Hints

- “What do the numbers really say?”
- “Look closer – is something hidden in the data?”

If participants ask directly or get confused, don’t say “read the letter,” but use phrases like:

- “What was written at the beginning?”
- “Can something be repeated without us realising it?”
- “If business is stagnant... what do the numbers show?”

Phase objective: Help participants realise that the core issue is not the product itself, but the lack of engagement and trust in online communication.

💡 Guiding questions:

⚡ Level 1 – Light Guidance (after 2–3 minutes of difficulty):

“You’ve already read it—maybe more than once. Where do all missions start?”
(Directs them back to the letter.)

⚡ Level 2 – Moderate Prompt (after another 2–3 minutes):

“Some things are loud without saying a word. Look at the numbers hidden in the story.” (Promotes them to look for numerical values or lack of results.)



◆ Level 3 – Direct Prompt (if needed):

“Engagement is zero. Sales – just as bad. That’s not just dramatic... it’s mathematical.” (Clearly refers to the phrase “zero, zero.”)

Solutions

Participants read the CEO letter and scan the QR code which leads to a cryptic message: “You’ve already been told everything you need. The launch was clean. The mission was clear. What’s the number that keeps repeating?”

They must identify a number that appears multiple times or is implied through repetition in the CEO letter.

✓ Correct answer: A specific two-digit number (e.g. “0,0”) that is referenced repeatedly in the CEO’s letter.

Step A.3 – Fake analytics report

Hints

◆ Level 1: “The truth might be in the way things start... not how they end.”

◆ Level 2: “Are there patterns in how the comments or sentences begin?”

◆ Level 3 – Direct Prompt (if needed): “First letters can speak louder than full sentences.”



Solutions

🔒 Hidden Element – password for next step: First letters

- **M**essages feel generic
- **I**nfluencers are uninterested
- **S**trategy unclear
- **S**poradic presence, no real content.
- **I**ncomplete brand presence
- **N**o real growth
- **G**ood tone...

+

- **T**ry refining voice and values
- **R**eports reveal inconsistent strategy
- **U**nderstanding your audience matters
- **S**uccess depends on trust
- **T**argeting must improve

→ Password: **MISSINGTRUST**



Phase B

Hints

- “Your audience is trying to tell you something – can you hear them?”
- “Each comment might be more than it seems. Is there a pattern?”
- “There are 8 total messages, but only 6 are numbered – maybe not all of them matter?”
- “The messages may seem random... but are they meant to be read in a certain order?”
- “Try looking just at the numbered ones – and the order they are in.”
- “What happens if you read just the first letters of each numbered comment?”
- “What if you were building a word from their beginnings?”
- “Try putting the messages in order — then look at the first letter of each one. What do they spell?”

Solutions

🔑 What does the player do?

- Players must:
- read carefully
- sort the comments by number
- take the first letter of each comment (where it is text)

Two of the comments — one consisting only of emojis (💎🔑🎁), and one starting with a question mark — are included as deliberate distractions. They represent



non-verbal or vague engagement and are not part of the hidden code. Their presence is intended to challenge participants' assumptions and reinforce the importance of identifying clear patterns.

 Hidden Element – password for next step:

Everything about the scent is lovely, but I wish the bar lasted longer.

Not a fan of the packaging — the lid fell apart in my gym bag.

Genuinely love the concept. Natural and plastic-free is the way to go!

Any chance you'll release a travel-sized version?

Great product, but I never see your posts unless I search for you.

Even my brother, who never cares about this stuff, is now using it.

→ Password: **ENGAGE**

Step B.2 – Platform match puzzle

Hints

- Introduction for participants: “This step shows that different audiences use different digital platforms and that effective communication depends on where people are already active.”
- “Think: Where do these people spend time online?”
- “Which platform matches their style and habits?”



◆ Level 1 - “Each group has their own digital hangout. Where would they scroll, post, or search?”

◆ Level 2 - “Think content: short videos? inspiration boards? business ideas?”

◆ Level 3 - “Young? Think TikTok. Business? LinkedIn. Creativity? Pinterest.”

Solutions

Participants match 5 target audiences to their best-fit social media platform. The correct pairing reveals a sealed envelope titled “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



Step B.3 – Influencer collaboration puzzle

Hints

- “You’ve listened to the customers. Now it’s time to meet them.”
- Match each audience group with the platform where they’re most likely to engage.
- Get them all right — and someone might reach out...”
- “What kind of hashtag would this influencer actually use?”
- “Do they sound like they care more about values... or discounts?”
- “The message is in the mood, not in the exact words.”.
- “They care about purpose. What kind of hashtag would reflect that?”

Solutions

Participants must:

- Read the letter carefully
- Understand that the entire message revolves around value, authenticity, and cause
- Fill in the missing hashtag with the most meaningful one:

#LeadWithValues ✓

When participants identify the correct hashtag, the facilitator gives them the final strategy template.



Phase C

Hints

- “Who are you really speaking to?”
- “What content would they actually interact with?”
- “How will you respond if things don’t go as planned?”

Solutions

Participants complete a short but structured community strategy. They may use a printed template or present verbally. The game master uses a checklist of 5 success criteria to evaluate:

- Clearly defined target audience
- Relevant platforms selected
- Realistic engagement ideas
- Recognition of challenges (e.g., negative feedback)
- Strategic alignment with brand values

Once presented, the Game master validates it using 3/5 criteria and ends the game with a success or improvement tips. See templates: “3.1.1. Phase C - Gamemaster hints” and “4. Phase D - Gamemaster hints”



Brief and Debrief

Brief (before the game)

Briefing is very important before entering an escape room. It is the moment where you explain the rules and how it works for those who don't know the game.

It also allows you to set the context and universe of the game introducing the beginning and explaining to the players their mission.

Explain:

- The mission: help the startup by building an online community.
- That they're "locked" in until they complete the tasks.
- The time limit and how clues are connected step-by-step.
- That teamwork and creativity are key!

Debrief (after the game)

Debriefing will allow you to receive feedback on your scenario and see what needs improvement. It will also allow you to see what players learned and remembered from this game session.

A good practice is to take some notes from players' and your experience so that you can go back to this information later.



Discuss:

- What was easy/difficult?
- What strategies worked best?
- What did they learn about online communities and business engagement?
- How can they use this knowledge in real life?

Encourage reflection and collect short feedback. Offer ideas on how this could apply to different business types or causes (e.g. climate activism, music, youth-led initiatives).

After the game, the Game Master can use the following fixed questions for structured reflection:

- Which target audience did you choose as the most important and why?
- Which platform did you prefer and how did this influence your choice of content?
- What did you learn about trust and the tone of communication online?
- How would you react to negative feedback from the community?
- How can this knowledge be applied to a real business or cause?

These questions help formulate the learning outcomes and the connection to real practice.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project code: 2023-2-LT02-KA220-YOU-0001831156

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