

3 considerations
for building and
leveraging an
Open Banking
community



In our most recently published version of the [Open Banking Monitor \(OBM\)](#), we highlight the importance of an Open Banking community. Banks are increasingly striving to entice collaboration and innovation with – and within – a wider community of API consumers (developers and businesses). The developer portals assessed in the OBM are basically the ‘shop windows’ through which banks do so. In order to become ‘Masters in Openness’ and to position themselves at the heart of this vibrant ecosystem, banks need to combine a rich API offering with a solid community-building and engagement strategy.

As a cornerstone for competitive advantage, banks must actively invest in such a strategy to develop strong community relationships. Indeed, merely offering high-quality documentation, sandboxes, developer tools and seamless access to APIs is not enough to win. In addition, banks are now competing on an ecosystem level rather than just a product level. If these relationships are built, maintained and nurtured over time, the whole community will drive innovation in an ecosystem that revolves around the bank’s own APIs.

Specifically, banks will be in a position to increase the number of developers using their APIs, obtain more direct input and feedback, signal intent for innovation and collaborate with the aim of developing relevant products and services. Overall, this contributes to better facilitation of

API ideation and use-case development to drive reach and adoption among end users of new Open Banking-enabled applications.

3 key considerations in community building

To support banks who are either starters in opening up or are seeking to boost their API uptake, we have identified three key considerations when building and enhancing a developer community (see Figure 1). In a previous [OBM release](#), we distinguished two key activity streams to create traction and promote engagement. With these three concrete considerations for banks, we now put this into an actionable context. We further elaborate and explain these considerations by highlighting insightful examples from banks included in our most recent release of the OBM.

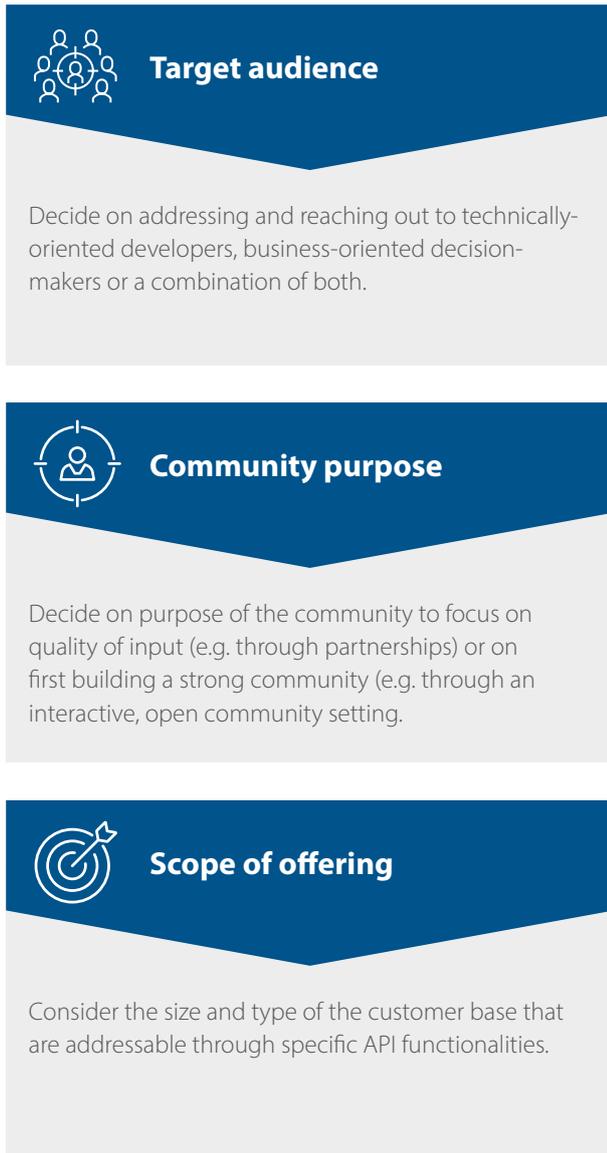


Figure 1: Three key considerations for banks in Open Banking community building

1. Target audience

Deciding on the target audience is a crucial step in determining how the developer portal can take account of preferences of third parties. Due to PSD2 and the increasing traction around Open Banking, business-minded individuals are exploring the possibilities of APIs ever-more frequently. As such, developer portals increasingly serve developers with a technical background, decision-makers with a business background or a combination of both. This is reflected in the type of content published, as well as the required expertise for understanding the published content. When content is tailored for and aimed at a broader audience, more potential visitors are likely to be persuaded to take a look at the bank's developer portal and Open Banking offering.

The term 'developers' can cover anything from individual developers and early-stage innovators in fintech, to large established enterprises involved in creating innovative API-enabled solutions. Their core focus and key activities are based on their expertise and their insight into the technical aspects of APIs and implementations. Hence, the core premise of a developer portal is to help developers understand the technical specifications of APIs. For example, **Bunq** – with its comprehensive Developer Experience – clearly informs individual developers. A dedicated [developer corner](#) includes an overview of API knowledge and updates, as well as tutorials on how to use the available APIs or where to apply them. As such, the content is structured across a variety of topics and different quick-start guides, allowing for quick navigation and an efficient developing process.

'Decision-makers' can include potential business clients concerned with the product development and strategic implementation of Open Banking solutions. Banks actively reach out to decision-makers in order to encourage them to choose the bank's Open Banking offerings. Blogs and articles are used to translate strategic implications into a recognisable business context. This often results in high-level descriptions of APIs or examples of successful implementations in the market. Additionally, some banks translate high-level API product descriptions into tangible examples for business settings.

Examples include:

- **ABN AMRO** provides more descriptive content through a successful case study on its partnership with BUX's implementation of ABN's Tikkie
- **Starling** and **Deutsche Bank** take this a step further by providing applications for B2C or B2B2C solutions, respectively
- **BBVA** and **Nordea** provide in their articles high-level descriptions of the APIs and their implications for businesses
- **Deutsche Bank** broadens this scope with mainly dedicated blog posts to further engage fintechs and developers, but also reaches out to businesses as well as informing potential customers by sending out newsletters.

Overall, our advice is to tailor your communication approach to your readers to ensure that your message reaches and resonates with the right audience – developers, decision-makers or both. Adopting various approaches and using tailored content to reach specific audiences promotes engagement amongst community members on the developer portal.

There are various methods for determining your target audiences. One way is to identify personas and develop user profiles. For example, **ABN AMRO** has used [personas](#)

as a tool for analysing the implications for different target audiences. Due to the growing application and consumption of APIs, there is no longer such a clear-cut distinction between visitors with either a technical background or a business one. As such, understanding the target audience enables banks to purposefully map content and tailor their activities to specific visitors' needs.

2. Community purpose

The purpose of a community is influenced by what banks would like to leverage through their developer portal. Generally, the goal is to create traction around APIs to ultimately enhance API consumption amongst businesses. Developers are often encouraged to contribute their ideas and feedback for creating or improving APIs, which ultimately enhances API implementation. Depending on the bank's specific purpose of its portal and community, we have observed different approaches and tools for facilitating community engagement. One such approach is through partnership programmes – either premium programmes or more open, community-based ones. The community purpose (i.e. a focus on the quantity or quality of input received from the community) plays an important role when setting up dedicated partnership programmes. For example, by carefully selecting partners based on key selection criteria, banks can focus on the quality of leads. In doing so, relevant developing parties can contribute to improving current offerings and help banks expand their business by bringing in their own network of potential clients. Additionally, selecting members upfront helps to establish a community of like-minded people, which in turn enhances the community.

Multiple banks have set up premium partnership programmes for creating, extending and improving their API offerings, with developers benefiting from various membership benefits.

Examples include:

- **Capital One** offers developers financial compensation
- **Commerzbank** provides developers with premium support and coaching through a partner manager and partner network
- **Deutsche Bank** provides early access to information, as well as building trust with new clients by using a 'verified partner' badge.

Some banks steer more towards community-based programmes, where community access is relatively open and input from the community is leading. Advantages of such community-based programmes include the broad availability of content to a wider audience and increased contact between developers, sometimes resulting in

innovative solutions. In such settings, the portal merely serves as platform for facilitating interaction between different parties. The banks expect greater interaction between community members to boost the number of ideas shared, ultimately leading to an increase in actionable insights.

Examples include:

- **Bunq's** 'Reddit'-like forum solution where content can be viewed without registration being necessary
- **Monzo's** community that facilitates interaction between developers, such as by having a section dedicated to personal introductions
- **Starling's** Slack Team for developers and GitHub repository, although developers can only view discussions after receiving an invitation to the channel.

In addition, some banks (i.e. **Bunq** and **Monzo**) indicate the experience and expertise of individual developers by labelling usernames. Community members can thus be assigned a specific role, such as moderator and/or contributor, to facilitate interaction and sovereignty amongst community members. Based on endorsements by other developers, contributors with extensive knowledge and experience are regarded as credible sources. They act as ambassadors by explaining things on the bank's behalf, and sovereignty is placed in the hands of the contributors themselves. In turn, the banks benefit from leveraging the expertise of the developers with the most relevant knowledge – and their portal gains credibility – while saving on moderating costs and efforts.

3. Scope of API offerings

When deciding on their community development approach, banks need to consider not only the API catalogue at heart of their developer portal, but also their customer base that can be reached through the available APIs. For example, an API catalogue with a strong focus towards corporates will likely have a significant corporate customer base, and one tailored towards merchants will logically have more SME-type customers. In other words, the nature of the APIs and customer base will ultimately determine what type of developers a bank will attract, which will in turn influence how best to approach them.

The above-mentioned examples of **Bunq** and **Deutsche Bank** illustrate this more clearly. **Bunq's** API catalogue and customer base have a strong focus towards consumers and merchants. In addition, being a challenger bank, it has a smaller customer base than the more traditional banks such as **Deutsche Bank**. As a result, **Bunq's** community development efforts are centred around community empowerment. This is evident from the features mentioned



above, all of which facilitate interaction between tech-minded consumers or merchants experimenting with the new possibilities presented by Open Banking.

In contrast, **Deutsche Bank's** API catalogue and customer base have a stronger focus on SMEs and corporates. As one of the largest banks in the world¹, it is only logical that it takes a different approach by centring its community development around the involvement of FinTech's, corporate treasurers and the like. This involvement consists of marketing efforts and partnerships to obtain feedback and get a better understanding of what the community wants. Just some examples of how **Deutsche Bank** facilitates this include releasing frequent publications on new APIs, possible use cases and successful case studies, an Access to Own (Business) Account feature and its API Partner network.

Conclusion

To leverage the opportunities presented by Open Banking, banks should start by looking at it as a two-way street. After all, both banks and API consumers stand to benefit from a well-maintained community that explores new ideas and brings use cases to life at scale.

As our OBM best practices indicate, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for building and enhancing an Open Banking community because no two banks, communities, customers or offerings are the same. However, gaining a clear overview of these factors will help banks to decide where to focus their efforts and how to shape their approach in order to effectively build, enhance, maintain and serve their Open Banking community.

[Reach out to us at INNOPAY](#) to discuss how we can support you in your community-building efforts and broader Open Banking transformation journey.

¹: S&P Global Market Intelligence's annual global bank ranking, 7 April 2020

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We do this by delivering strategy, product development and implementation support in the domain of Digital Identity, Data Sharing and Payments. Our services capture the entire strategic and operational spectrum of our client's business, the technology they deploy, and the way they respond to local and international regulations.

We have grown from strength to strength since our foundation in 2002 and operate from our offices in Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Berlin. Our head office is located in The Netherlands, where we have the #1 market position.

We are a founding member of Holland FinTech, a financial technology hub with links to the rest of Europe, the US, the Middle East and Asia. Our team consists of over 60 experienced domain experts who regularly advise a wide range of global organisations.

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