

**Fostering Refugee and Migrant Talent Through Entrepreneurship: Finding a Digital
Solution for Capacity**

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i. Abstract

Capacity is a nonprofit organization that supports migrant and refugee entrepreneurs and job seekers living in Switzerland. As Capacity expands community outreach, they have identified challenges with alumni management and communication. We interviewed Capacity employees, donors, volunteers, members, and alumni to identify their needs and then analyzed available platforms to identify well-matched digital solution options for Capacity. We highly recommended two centralized, community-building platforms to promote networking and improve alumni management.

ii. Acknowledgements

We would like to use this space to thank the members of the Capacity team for trusting us to help them, and for taking the time to help guide us. Our advisors, Herman and Brigitte Servatius, gave us key advice when it came to our presentations, research, and writing. Professor Carol Stimmel was an incredible help in writing our project proposal. We would also like to thank all twelve of the people we interviewed, as well as the two who answered our questions in writing, for taking time out of their busy days to give insights that would become the crux of our research. This project was a success due to the altruism of those who helped us along the way.

iii. Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

Year after year migrants leave their home countries to start anew elsewhere, whether that be to escape war, natural disaster, political instability, or simply in hopes of finding a better life.

However, these migrants face the challenge of making a living for themselves in a foreign workforce; from language barriers, to discrimination, and the struggle of assimilation, it is no easy task. Capacity is an organization that helps migrants and refugees in Switzerland find a job or start their own business by developing their networking and entrepreneurial skills. With the potential to help shape an entire organization and community, the goal of our project was to help Capacity with the issues they had been facing in terms of alumni management and visibility for their alumni entrepreneurs and broader ecosystem.

Goal and Objectives

Our goal was to identify a digital solution to increase the visibility of Capacity's entrepreneurs to potential audiences such as clients, sponsors, and donors as well as improve alumni data management. To that end, our objectives were as follows:

1. Develop an understanding of the challenges Capacity faces.
2. Research and narrow down a list of potential platforms.
3. Present live demonstrations of recommended platform(s) to Capacity.

Interviews

Our research in Switzerland began by interviewing members of the Capacity team, board, programme participants, and sponsors to determine how their current network could be improved with digital support. Our 5 main takeaways from said interviews were:

- 1) Capacity needed a space for networking, promoting events, and discussion.
- 2) They needed the platform to be accessible to the entire Capacity ecosystem. This includes the board, staff, entrepreneurs, alumni, sponsors, and the entirety of the access programme.
- 3) They needed the platform to be more effective and organized than their current mode of alumni management, WhatsApp.
- 4) They wanted the ability for their entrepreneurs to be able to update their profile information and post to the platform, to help automate alumni data collection.
- 5) They needed the platform to be able to grow and evolve with their organization.

The interviews we performed and analyzed helped us understand what types of online resources would best help the Capacity community. We developed a list of 25 specific criteria that would benefit Capacity based on our coded interviews. Thus, we proceeded to the next stage of our work, to find a list of platforms that had the potential of satisfying the newly realized needs of Capacity.

Platform research

Our team scoured the internet for platforms that could satisfy the criteria developed from the interviews. We were also asked to look into specific platforms by a member of Capacity's board. Consequently, we were able to compile a list of 13 platforms each of which had the potential of

meeting some, if not all, of the aforementioned criteria. Once our team developed this list, we began testing on the platforms by setting up trials and delving into the features that each platform had to offer. We then conducted background research into these platforms on their privacy policies, pricing, user reviews, and the quality of their customer service.

Once we had a set of platforms with potential to meet Capacity's needs, we planned to narrow down the list to the top one or two platforms which were best suited to them. We assigned each criterion a weight from 1 to 10, signifying its importance. A weight of 1 meant that the stated need would be "nice to have" in the platform, but would not be of utmost importance and a weight of 10 meant that the aforementioned criterion was an absolute necessity to include in the platform. Following that, we rated how well each platform satisfied each criterion on a scale from 0 to 10. A platform scoring 0 for a criterion meant that the platform altogether failed to meet that requirement, while a score of 10 signified that the platform fully satisfied Capacity's need. After assigning scores to all criteria for each platform, we calculated a total score using a weighted arithmetic mean to develop an estimate for the given platform's effectiveness. By using this approach, we narrowed down our compiled list of potential platforms to two options that stood out above the rest, Mighty Networks and Circle, both of which met the criteria with 90% accuracy.

Recommendations to Capacity

Our team presented our research to Capacity and recommended they decide between Mighty Networks and Circle. We began the presentation by going over our research and the logic behind our decisions including the list of 25 needs we discovered, our weighting system, and how both

were used to shorten the list of platforms and determine the finalists. To show how the platforms fit Capacity's needs, we presented both Circle and Mighty Networks using a customer journey demonstration, recommended by Capacity's team. Through this customer journey, we went through each platform from the point of view of a made-up entrepreneur in their program to show how they might interact with each platform. We made sure to highlight the shared strengths and key differences of the platforms. Our presentation concluded with an open discussion segment where we answered questions from Capacity's board or staff to best prepare them to make a final decision. The Capacity team decided that they would need more time to weigh their options and agreed to make a decision in the foreseeable future.

Limitations

Some limitations we faced during our research included contacting alumni and our ability to research each platform in-depth. Alumni were especially difficult to reach compared to other Capacity community members. This could be because they were no longer involved with Capacity, or they may be too busy managing their businesses. We were limited to only one written interview from an alumni, so we unfortunately couldn't represent their perspective as much as we desired in our initial proposal. Additionally, we were limited to the free trial version of every platform we tested, meaning we were missing out on testing several features such as monetization and custom CSS. Despite these limitations, we were able to choose two exemplary platforms and demonstrate them to Capacity.

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1. Introduction

Migration is generally defined as the action of leaving one's country to settle permanently or temporarily in another, but the term does not encompass the multitude of reasons one might have for doing so. Year after year, migrants leave their home countries to start anew in someplace else, whether that be to escape war, natural disaster, political instability, or simply in hopes of finding a better life. Once they reach a new country, migrants face the challenge of making a living for themselves in a foreign workforce. On average, migrants and refugees face more struggles in the workplace compared to native citizens or nationals. Migrants throughout the world work longer hours, for less pay, and in worse conditions than non-migrants, leading to poor health outcomes, increased risk to injury and occupational fatalities ([Moyce & Schenker, 2018](#)). They may face discrimination along with the regular struggles of moving somewhere new, such as culture shock or language barriers. In countries with a high migrant influx, they must face competition and market themselves as a cut above the rest. Rather than joining the labor force, some migrants try starting their own business, which comes with a whole new set of challenges.

In Switzerland, migrants typically include people from the neighboring countries of Germany, Italy, and France, and since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many European countries have seen an influx of Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war. Out of 37 countries under the OECD (an intergovernmental economic group standing for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), including the United States, Switzerland ranks 3rd place in terms of the ratio of immigrants to the country's population. According to the United Nations, the foreign-born account for 26% of the total Swiss population ([Switzerland - OECD, n.d.](#)). Still, migrant and refugee entrepreneurs are an underserved population in Switzerland, with limited access to the

business knowledge, education, and financial backing that is afforded to Swiss nationals.

Through no fault of their own, these shortcomings can discourage prospective migrant or refugee entrepreneurs from starting their own business, as the skill sets they bring may be devalued in Switzerland due to a very specific market demand for those skill sets that are already filled by earlier waves of migrants or nationals ([Dencker et al., 2021](#)).

In recent years, the general public in Switzerland has become more supportive of immigration, but it is still predominantly treated as a political issue that needs to be managed and corrected through policy measures. However, this view leaves a void when it comes to the kind of social support that helps immigrants make a place for themselves in the workforce. To fill this space, organizations such as Capacity have tried to help the immigrants coming into Switzerland make a living for themselves. Since 2015, Capacity has aided migrant entrepreneurs seeking to find their place in Zurich by offering an “Entrepreneurship Programme” that teaches the skills needed to succeed in the business world. Other companies, such as Unshackled Ventures and Singa Switzerland have similar goals in helping people with a migrant or refugee background. Capacity will be focused on for this research, but they are not the only ones fighting to even the playing ground for migrants in Europe. Previous teams at WPI have worked to assist this group in their efforts by helping Capacity expand beyond their base city of Zurich and we hope to extend those efforts.

The 2021 WPI team worked with Capacity to expand their borders outside of Switzerland.

However, they were limited in accomplishing their goal because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and were unable to meet often with the sponsor. Despite these limitations, their

research did reveal several internal actions Capacity might take before working to expand outside the Swiss border, giving our team an opportunity to assist Capacity on these improvements. Capacity has requested that WPI help their organization automate the collection of data for their for-profit and non-profit initiatives that would improve their ability to deliver products and services to their community of interest. In working with the previous WPI team, Capacity is looking for assistance on reinforcing the infrastructure of the organization today, before continuing to expand outside their base of operations. Automating data collection would give Capacity more time to help make Zurich a city for any migrant who wishes to start their own company.

The goal of this project was to identify a digital solution to increase the visibility of Capacity's entrepreneurs to potential audiences such as clients, sponsors, and donors, so as to support their growth in local and international markets. In accomplishing our goal, we spoke with Capacity leaders, their donors, and their corporate partners in order to discover what issues needed to be addressed, and determined what kind of online platform might help solve their problems. With that information, we selected a digital solution to help organize past, current, and future entrepreneurs' data and help Capacity share and promote the hard work of their entrepreneurs, helping their new businesses thrive in relevant markets, and supporting the migrant population of Switzerland.

2. Background

2.1: Refugees and Migrants

2.1.1 Motivation for Migration

Migration can be one of the most difficult and intimidating things for people to do. Individuals may choose to migrate to escape hardships in their native countries or to seek more promising opportunities, taking on cultural, societal, and financial barriers in order to succeed. For example, people may leave a country to escape political instability or a poor economy; this can be seen in the case of Brazilian migrants moving to Portugal to escape political instability and corruption ([Marques et al., 2022](#)). They may instead struggle with financial crises and seek a fresh start in a new country, either to give themselves or their family a better quality of life ([Marques et al., 2022](#)). Some individuals and families migrate for more positive reasons: Medhanie Kidane migrated from Ethiopia to Switzerland at seventeen years old and believes that “[the] beauty of the world lies in its diversity of cultures...as such, he is working to develop the connection we have with our culture through the feel-good factor of traditional dresses by creating a platform where Eritrean and Ethiopian traditional items would be easily accessible to everyone” ([Capacity Zurich – Refugee & Migrant Entrepreneurship, n.d.](#)). According to his business description, Kidane migrated from a desire to share his culture with other citizens of the world.

2.1.2 Refugee Displacement

When people leave their home country to live in another country, aside from migrants described previously, there are also refugees. This is an important distinction; refugees do not explicitly choose to leave their home country, but rather are forced out, oftentimes through war. For example, the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine continues to force many people to seek

asylum in other European countries. According to [swissinfo.ch](https://www.swissinfo.ch), a Swiss-based news source geared towards sharing Swiss perspectives with the rest of the world, “Cantonal authorities tasked with dealing with the new arrivals [from Ukraine] expect as many as 300,000 refugees to reach Switzerland by the end of the year” ([RTS/swissinfo.ch/sb](https://www.rts.ch/swissinfo.ch/sb), n.d.). At the time of the article’s writing (September 26, 2022), there are 33,379 people of working age with the Swiss S permit, which allows an adult the right to stay in Switzerland for a year and work, 9.4% of which are currently working. ([Keystone-SDA/ac. \(n.d.\)](#)) This brings a new context to finding work as an immigrant in Switzerland; with so much competition, it can be difficult to find a place in the workforce, let alone factoring in the struggle of being forced out of one's country, potentially losing both home and family.

2.1.3 Migrants and Workforce Integration

Once migrants and refugees have entered their new host country, they continue to face struggles in the workplace. There is an inherent hardship in learning to exist in a foreign place; one may face racism, oppression, and prejudice, or general disdain as well as the difficulty of communicating with a language barrier ([Buarqoub, 2019](#)). Many skilled migrants struggle to get jobs that they are qualified for, due to cultural differences and language barriers. Often, they struggle with communicating their skills and understanding Swiss culture, effectively giving the Swiss labor market a high barrier to entry. In Switzerland, the unemployment rate for migrants is more than double that of non-migrants, and the rate of self-employment for migrants in Switzerland is lower than that of other OECD/EU countries. Some of the constraining factors keeping the Swiss migrant population below other migrant populations are greater societal inequalities of nationality, gender, duration of stay, and class ([Mittmasser, 2022](#)).

2.1.4 Why Switzerland?

Despite the challenges migration brings, Zurich, Switzerland is considered an attractive destination for migrant entrepreneurs. According to USNews, Switzerland is #6 in education, #14 to start a business, and #22 to start a career compared to other countries ([Switzerland Ranks Among the World's Best Countries, n.d.](#)). It is politically stable, and on average offers higher salaries than other European countries ([Le News, 2021](#)). The Swiss government has more recently made efforts to provide support for immigrants in the workforce. In 2007, the Swiss government began to explicitly work to improve the experience of foreign presence into the labor market, “in the interest of demographic and social development” ([Wanner et al., 2009](#)).

2.2 Entrepreneurship

2.2.1 What is Entrepreneurship?

The word “entrepreneur” is one that has had many contextual definitions throughout the existence of the word. “Entrepreneur” was taken from the old French word “entreprendre,” meaning “undertake,” and was adapted in the mid 18th century to denote a person who undertakes a task or someone who manages or organizes an artist or performer ([“Entrepreneur, n.” n.d.](#)). Today, the term is synonymous with an enterpriser or someone who innovates a new organization or network typically stemming from a creative idea. Entrepreneurs use their creative skills along with their ability to identify and obtain resources to innovate and find opportunities to gain something under uncertain or risky conditions ([Dollinger, 2008](#)). In this sense, “entrepreneurship” refers to the activity in which one takes on said risk and uses one’s skills and disposable resources to get their ideas off the ground. Like its relative “entrepreneur,”

“entrepreneurship” has had a multitude of shifts in its definition over its existence.

Entrepreneurship was first described as ‘Profits from bearing uncertainty and risk.’ Over time and cultural shifts, “entrepreneurship” has come to describe an opportunity, growth, and innovation focused mindset ([Dollinger, 2008](#)).

2.2.2 The Relationship of Migrants and Refugees to Entrepreneurship

Motivations towards entrepreneurship are typically organized into two categories, *necessity-driven entrepreneurship* and *opportunity-driven entrepreneurship* ([Coffman & Sunny, 2021](#)). The former is generally defined as “entrepreneurial activity arising out of need due to a lack of employment alternatives” ([Dencker et al., 2021](#)) p. 60). As such, necessity driven entrepreneurs typically have a limited growth potential as they often have to emulate what other successful businesses are already practicing. The latter, however, is loosely defined as an entrepreneurial activity that is driven by the pursuit for an opportunity to create new wealth ([Dencker et al., 2021](#)). With these definitions in mind, one could infer the relationship between the two categories of entrepreneurship to the differences between migrants and refugees as referenced in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

As defined, migrants typically leave their countries of origin by choice and therefore would be more likely to seek better opportunities in foreign lands, classifying them for the most part as opportunity-driven entrepreneurs ([Migrant Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced American Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com, n.d.](#)).

Refugees are forced from their native countries due to mortal dangers such as war or fear of persecution leaving them with nothing to bring to their new country of residence and nothing to

go back to if they were to return home. With this being the case, refugees are more likely to need to become self-employed in order to support their basic needs in a new environment and as such are generally classified as necessity-driven entrepreneurs; however, despite their need, they still may struggle to receive support, both from the unfamiliar host country and their peers.

2.2.3 Support for Migrant Entrepreneurs

In recent times, non-profit organizations have sprung up to help migrants successfully join the daunting Swiss labor market. Capacity has a mission to help make entrepreneurial education accessible as well as to create economic opportunities for all to create a society in which everyone can contribute their skills and potential in an environment that values diversity amongst its members. Since 2015, Capacity has helped over 85 entrepreneurs start their own business ([*Capacity Zurich – Refugee & Migrant Entrepreneurship, n.d.*](#)). Other groups work to produce a similar effect as Capacity on migrant experiences throughout the world with varying approaches, from alleviating financial barriers of migrating to a new country or new product development costs. Unshackled Ventures (<https://www.unshackledvc.com>) is a corporation that invests in and helps immigrant entrepreneurs that come to the United States while also helping them maintain their work visas. Open Invest (<https://www.openinvest.com/>) is a financial analysis and investing platform which allows for people to invest in companies helping refugees. Other organizations bring groups of entrepreneurs together with a similar goal to help them advance their collective idea. Singa Switzerland (<https://singaswitzerland.ch/>) helps connect migrant and non-migrant entrepreneurs to collaborate on entrepreneurial projects. The Tent Partnership for Refugees (<https://www.tent.org/>) is a partnership of over 80 companies in an attempt for the business community to engage with the refugee crisis.

2.2.4 The Inspiration for Capacity

Capacity co-founder Valentina Velandia appeared on a Swiss business and entrepreneurship podcast called Swisspreneur Show to talk about her experience looking for work in Switzerland as a highly qualified immigrant with a language barrier ([Krähenbühl, n.d.](#)). Velandia came to Switzerland from her native country of Colombia. In discussing the refugee crisis in Europe, she shares that the organization is motivated by her personal experience and that led her to want to help others who may have been struggling with similar problems that she faced as a foreigner. The mission statement of Capacity represents this personal inspiration, which says “We firmly believe in the democratization of entrepreneurial education and the creation of economic opportunities for all” ([Capacity Zurich – Refugee & Migrant Entrepreneurship, n.d.](#)). The organization started in 2015 and has been running since. Velandia also addresses the stigma surrounding migration and about how society tends to stereotype migrants as drifters moving from one place to the next, and often overlooks the vital contributions they can make in their new societies. She uses the term ‘human libraries’ to illustrate how every person has a story, and to remind listeners that migrants have a uniquely important role in society ([Krähenbühl, n.d.](#)). According to Velandia, migrants and refugees shouldn’t be defined by the choice they made to leave one country to go to the next, remarking of her own experience, “I’m more than the daughter of an illegal migrant, I’m more than a Latin-American migrant in another country. I have many more things to contribute than just that.” ([Krähenbühl, n.d.](#)). This powerful quote serves to remind us of the inspiration behind Capacity such as the similar ideas to influence the societies of which they are a part of, an inspiration that the refugees and migrants working with

Capacity share. They have ideals and aspirations that they want to achieve and are not less than human because of their experience.

Alongside co-founding Capacity, Valentina aims to help migrants start new businesses, in part by reframing migration in a positive light and helping lift up their entrepreneurial dreams.

Capacity's "Entrepreneurship Programme" is designed to be beneficial to entrepreneurs as it helps with education and networking before an entrepreneur starts their business.

2.2.5 Capacity's Entrepreneurship Programme

Capacity's "Entrepreneurship Programme" is designed to support migrant and refugee entrepreneurs by helping with educating on the skills they need to develop and networking with them before said entrepreneur starts their business. Before becoming an entrepreneur, migrants and refugees sign up for the Entrepreneurship Programme by applying through the respective link on their website. Once accepted, Capacity will reach out and invite them to take part in their program. The program is split into three stages: in the first stage, members spend their time developing prototyping skills as well as the skills necessary to be an entrepreneur, such as critical thinking, communication, decision making, financial modeling, planning, organization, and negotiation. In the second phase of the program, members set up a foundation for their new business by networking with and being mentored by experienced entrepreneurs as well as experts in the financial industry. In the third phase, the entrepreneurs prepare to pitch their company to the real world, perfect a business plan, and add any last fixes before launching their company.

2.3 Digital Platforms

Capacity, like many growing organizations, strives for constant improvement to better inform their business decisions, optimize operations, and reduce unnecessary costs. Additionally, proper management of Capacity's member and alumni information allows for ease of access to such information by Capacity and their sponsors. A well-managed digital solution can simplify or automate collecting information, allowing for Capacity to reallocate time towards helping the entrepreneurs.

2.3.1 Differences Between Digital Platforms

One solution could be a learning management system; this type of platform describes “a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, automation, and delivery of educational courses, training programs, or learning and development programs”

[*\(Moodle—Open-source learning platform | Moodle.org, n.d.\)*](#). These types of platforms are known for facilitating peer to peer learning with a greater focus on the learning needs of its members. An alternative platform type is a learning based community building platform. This platform type offers an integrated learning space, similar to the learning management system, but offers features of a community building platform such as FaceBook. These additional features include the ability to connect groups of people, direct messaging between peers, discussion spaces, and individualized profiles, all which allow users to share personalized stories, ideas, and concepts. [*\(Mighty Networks | Build Communities, Courses & Memberships, n.d.\)*](#) A main distinction between types of community building platforms is their ability to provide their own webspaces, separate from a larger platform.

2.3.2 Use of Online Platforms by Organizations

Learning-based community building platforms, databases, and learning management systems can all be useful in helping organizations market themselves and their networks while increasing outreach into relevant markets. As an organization grows, so does the amount of data they need to store and access in a timely manner. Automation of data collection, through user input, allows for complicated or large amounts of data to be processed quickly, freeing up time and resources which can be better spent in other areas of the organization. At Capacity, their alumni network is ever-growing, and it has become challenging to keep all relevant contact and entrepreneur business information up to date. With the implementation of an online hub for their important information, entrepreneurs and Capacity members alike would be able to spend less time and resources on data management with a digital platform that can be updated by the community.

2.4 About Capacity

Capacity is a nonprofit talent incubator geared towards those with migrant and refugee backgrounds. They use 3 educational programmes to help participants develop the necessary skills to successfully join the Swiss workforce. In the Entrepreneurship Programme, participants hone their entrepreneurial and public speaking skills to help them develop a business from an idea. In the Access and Access Fast Track Programmes, participants from foreign countries learn how to apply their already specialized skill sets to the Swiss labor market as well as develop their interview and networking skills.

Capacity schedules weekly meetings to ensure the entirety of the team can meet at least once a week. These meetings are well-organized; with previously developed agendas, timed down to the

minute, to ensure all points are met in the allocated time. Due to the international backgrounds of the team, each meeting is held in English, the closest thing to a lingua franca that's available. As their method of communication, the Capacity team uses e-mail, Slack, WhatsApp, and Asana to communicate with each other.

2.5 Conclusion to the Background

At the time of this paper's writing, there is great unrest in Europe due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Refugees and migrants are facing more struggles than ever in trying to assimilate to a new and foreign workplace. Capacity is one organization that has been trying to help these people start anew by establishing their own companies or by joining the Swiss labor market. However, without a digital platform to manage their past and current mentees, more work is given to their employees, spent on keeping up with an increasingly large alumni network. Having access to a community hub would enhance Capacity's mission of helping any migrant who wishes to find success in Switzerland.

3. Methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss our objectives for the project as well as our methods for data collection, analysis, and the limitations we faced in our research. At the accomplishment of our objectives, we obtained sufficient understanding of the current challenges that Capacity is seeking to overcome, and presented a recommendation and demonstration of two potential digital solutions to address said challenges.

3.2 Objectives

Our objectives were as follows:

1. Develop an understanding of the challenges Capacity faces.
2. Research and narrow down a list of potential platforms.
3. Present live demonstrations of the recommended platform(s) to Capacity.

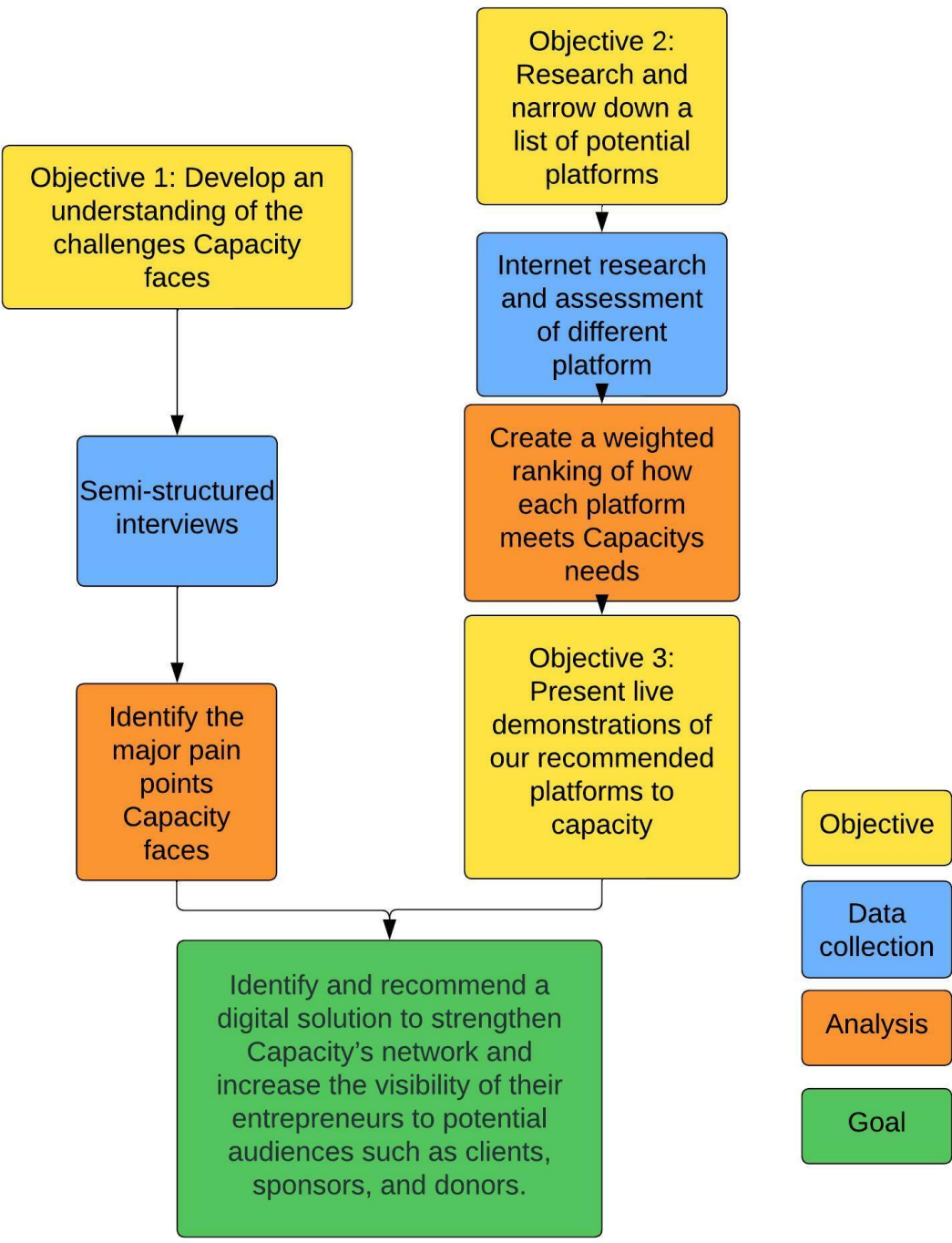


Figure 1: Visual Methodology Representation (Author's own work)

This flowchart demonstrates the structure of our methodology, and how the objectives and data collection methods lead us to our goal.

3.3 Objective 1: Develop an Understanding of the Challenges Capacity Faces

3.3.1 Purpose

In order to understand the intricacies of the problem we were asked to solve, we needed to develop an understanding of the individuals who will contribute to and benefit from a digital platform. In the project description provided by our sponsor, Capacity stated they were looking to “increase the visibility of the nearly 120 (and growing!) entrepreneurs in our network, and support their growth in local and international markets.” To that end, we needed to understand the challenges that are impeding the visibility of the entrepreneurs. The 2021 WPI team worked on a project that focused on expanding Capacity and assessed in their conclusion that “Capacity’s program lacks the necessary resources to spread their impact outside of Zurich” ([Chiocchio et al., 2021](#)). To gain a deeper understanding of the challenges Capacity is currently facing and how they envision using a digital platform to their advantage, we conducted semi-structured interviews with relevant major stakeholders, including the Capacity team, programme participants, and various corporate partners and donors.

3.3.2 Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Our goal was to recruit stakeholders from three areas of concern: the Capacity team and board, programme participants, and corporate partners and donors. We initially made contact with a few corporate volunteers, provided by Capacity, at a kick-off meet and greet event for their Access Fast Track programme. In addition, we were given access to the contact information of Capacity’s team, board, and select entrepreneurs, whom we asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. We conducted a total of 14 interviews split as follows: 5 members of

the Capacity team, 4 members of the board, 2 programme participants, and 3 corporate sponsors.

Using semi-structured interview techniques, our goals were:

- To Capacity leaders: Clarify what current challenges they were facing in regards to outreach and how they envisioned a digital platform helping them overcome these issues.
- To programme participants: Discover the issues they had faced in trying to promote themselves after leaving Capacity's Entrepreneurship or Access Programmes, and what had worked for them that could be replicated digitally.
- To donors/stakeholders: Find out how they engaged with Capacity entrepreneurs, and how a digital platform would improve this experience.

We asked for consent before recording interviews, as well as had interviewees sign our research consent form (Appendix A). Our preliminary questions can be found in Appendices B, C, D and E.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed, apart from one where we took notes after being denied consent to record. We began by compiling our interviews into a document, organized by question, where we were able to visually see similarities and differences in our respondents' views and needs. Using these comparisons we derived a list of 25 criteria which best displayed Capacity's needs from the platform. We ranked these criteria and ideas based on how frequently they were brought up in our interview responses and how critical we determined the feature to be. We assigned corresponding weights to those rankings on a scale of 1 to 10, with a weight of 1 signifying the criterion would be a "nice to have" in our platform but is of lower importance, while a weight of 10 meant that it was critical that the platform addressed the requirement.

3.3.4 Research Limitations

A barrier we faced was maintaining or establishing contact with the Capacity alumni. For personal reasons or otherwise it seemed as though we could never maintain stable contact with any alumni whom we reached out to or who Capacity reached out to on our behalf. There were a few instances where we had scheduled interviews but the interviewee did not show up for personal reasons. When this would happen we would request that the interviewee write out their answers to our questions in a document that they send back to us. This method was less effective than a live interview since we could not be there to dive deeper into their answers and create new questions on the spot.

3.4 Objective 2: Research and narrow down a list of potential platforms

3.4.1 Purpose

Objective 1 was done with the intent of confirming the conclusions of the 2021 WPI team that suggested “an online resource, possibly a platform, backed up by a database containing information of mentors and coaches that is accessible to all entrepreneurs participating in the program” to help systematize the Capacity program for growth ([Chiocchio et al., 2021](#)). In our research, Capacity team and board members expressed that they were interested in expanding this idea to include many additional features, like an event calendar and infrastructure to support future paid members. With this in mind, our objective was to assess the platforms that might fit the immediate criteria identified in Objective 1.

3.4.2 Data Collection

Based on our interviews, our team researched and identified potential platforms that would be capable of addressing the visibility and outreach problems that Capacity was confronted with. We looked for websites or applications that were applicable to Capacity's needs and wants, and were backed up by consumer testimonials as well as online reviews. Through our research we created a list of 13 different platforms which had the potential of significantly helping Capacity meet their goals.

Throughout the first interviews, we hypothesized that a well run, externally facing Facebook group may solve many of the visibility issues that we learned about. We envisioned a space where Capacity's team, entrepreneurs, alumni, sponsors, coaches, and anyone else interested in supporting small refugee run businesses could interact. A few days after our interview with one Capacity team member, we planned and set up a Facebook group where all of the aforementioned groups could network, share opportunities, plan events, and promote their businesses. We planned to closely monitor activity and usage over the coming weeks.

We were optimistic about the potential of the Facebook group, but were unsure if people still regularly used Facebook. In many of our interviews we discussed which social media platforms were most widely used in Switzerland, and many interviewees said that Facebook was losing popularity, and was mostly used for personal life. However, according to Statista, the number of Facebook users in Switzerland has actually risen steadily since 2018 ([Statista, 2022](#)).

We soon determined that a Facebook group was too public and wasn't a good space to put out important information about their programs. Specifically, we learned that program participants often did not want their information so publicly available, and Facebook's privacy policy was undesirable. Due to these publicity concerns, as well as a lack of key features, we ended the trial early. We continued to look into more private, internal platforms geared towards organizations. When possible, we set up free trials to get hands-on experience using the platform, and were able to record first-hand data on more subjective topics such as 'ease of use' and 'general feel'.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

Using the interview recordings, transcriptions, and notes obtained in Objective 1, we scored each platform based on how well it matched each of Capacity's needs. The scoring was done on a scale from 0-10 where 0 meant the platform did not meet a specific criterion, while a 10 meant the platform fully fulfilled the criterion. Once we had our organized data, all that was left was to compare how each platform fit into Capacity's needs. To calculate a comparable total score, we multiplied the weight assigned to each criterion by the score assigned to each platform in that respective category. We then totaled each sum and divided it by the maximum score achievable to give us a weighted percentage of the criteria that were met by each platform. Below is an abridged version of our platform analysis table.

Criteria	Weight	Mighty Networks	Circle	...	Sakai	...	Moodle (LMS)	...
Total	1680	1518 (90%)	1504 (90%)	...	950 (57%)	...	794 (47%)	...
Ability to create multiple spaces	10	9	10	...	3	...	0	...
Compatibility with OR replacement of Google Classroom	10	10	8	...	10	...	8	...
Different levels of access	10	10	10	...	7	...	10	...
Ability to maintain many members	10	10	9	...	10	...	10	...
Ability to obtain and present entrepreneur information	10	8	9	...	5	...	5	...
Community marketplace	8	4	6	...	0	...	0	...
Price	8	8	7	...	10	...	10	...
Ease of use	8	8	9	...	8	...	4	...
...

Table 1: Abridged version of our platform analysis table. A gradient from green (10) to white (0) was applied as a visual representation of each score.

With Mighty Networks and Circle both scoring 90%, our team decided that we would create mockup communities for both and present them to Capacity as our final recommendation to them.

3.4.4 Research Limitations

The main limitation for this objective is our inability to test each platform in depth. Certain solutions may sound good on paper, but face issues in their actual implementation. We will need to rely on theoretical analysis, as we cannot trial-and-error every possible community platform. Another potential limitation is artificial inflation of reviews for a specific platform in which case we need to make sure we are gathering reviews and vetting each platform from as many reputable sources as possible; however we have no real way of identifying fake reviews or review sets that have been inflated.

3.5 Objective 3: Presenting Our Recommended Platforms

3.5.1 Purpose

Once Mighty Networks and Circle were identified as our top candidates, we recommended how to structure and use them in a way that effectively addressed as many of the weighted criteria as possible. This included addressing Capacity's need for a self-sustainable community building platform, a space for the Capacity team to monitor their entire ecosystem, and a way for alumni and entrepreneurs to update their own information and keep Capacity records up to date.

3.5.2 Preliminary Presentation

Two days before our final demonstration to the full Capacity team, we debriefed our ideas in a preliminary presentation to both a Capacity team member and board member who followed our progress closely, to receive their feedback. In this presentation, we summarized the issues and challenges we had identified through our interview rounds, possible solutions we discovered, and why other options ended up not being considered for our final presentation. Finally, using the information we gathered over the course of the project, we spoke in depth on the following points:

1. Our suggested platforms to choose from
2. Types of data and information with which to populate the platform
3. Security and privacy considerations
4. How to use it to promote the visibility of their entrepreneurs

We also took time to plan out the final demonstration, and built a timed agenda to follow. We discussed the idea of using one or more customer journeys to demonstrate the features and user experience of each platform. We also received helpful tips for moderating presentations and open discussions, and decided to present using a “parking lot” technique for organizing and answering questions.

3.5.3 Final Presentation and Demonstration

To begin our final presentation, we explained our methodology and the strategies we used that led to our recommendations. We held a short Q&A period for clarifying questions before moving into our demonstration. We then presented Circle and Mighty networks through a customer journey by role-playing a new Entrepreneurship Programme participant setting up their account for the first time and learning how to use both platforms. We also demonstrated their day-to-day activities to show off some of the important features of each platform, and to show how their community would be interacting with the platforms directly. After the customer journey ended, we moved into a more technical demonstration of how each platform would be used and moderated from an administrative perspective. We concluded the presentation by giving final recommendations on how to approach and talk about these platforms, and opened the floor to discussion.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Current Recommendations

Our recommendations to the Capacity team and board were not limited to which platform to implement. Since both Circle and Mighty Networks were similarly high scoring, we elected to objectively present both options and let the team discuss their preferences. These platforms, as previously stated, are the most promising candidates we found through our research that would be capable of fulfilling a vast majority of Capacity's needs. We recommended that they should be populating the platform of their choosing with their programmes' coursework, and transition from Google Classroom once satisfied with the course setup. We also suggested that they create spaces for event scheduling, community engagement posts, and a question and answer style forum. We additionally advised that moderators assign roles when new members join the platform, and suggested how they set up an appropriate permissions system. To maintain a level of privacy for their programme participants, we advised that they create well-labeled spaces that are outward facing to ensure that no sensitive information is publicly visible.

We also offered advice on how they should view and discuss their chosen platform to ensure that the team would not begin this endeavor with off-target expectations. We specified that we are recommending two learning-based community building platforms that can better connect the Capacity ecosystem. Circle and Mighty Networks both have the potential to centralize and replace many of the online tools they are currently using such as WhatsApp, Google Classroom, the Capacity newsletter, a job board, and marketplace. However, we were clear on the platforms' limitations and advised that they should not be used as a file management system, and they will not effectively replace spaces used for internal team communication, such as Slack and Asana.

4.1.1 Circle

Circle is one of the final two platforms we recommended. Circle offers a forum-based interface, and includes important features such as an event calendar, coursework, single sign-on, paywalls, and a reasonable price tag of \$99 per month. It is organized into ‘spaces’ that each have their own purpose, and each post should be relevant to the space of which it is in. One advantage of Circle’s user interface is its similarity to Slack, which the Capacity team is already familiar with. Circle is also white-label, meaning a community can be customized to fit Capacity’s colors. Circle’s biggest draw over Mighty Networks is that it is incredibly user-friendly for both users and moderators. We believe it would require little time and effort to both set-up and maintain, which was a highly weighted criteria in our earlier analysis. Main weaknesses include a poor mobile app (with a lower rating than the corresponding Mighty Networks app), inability for non-moderators to edit the event calendar, and Circle’s relatively young age. Some features, including the area for uploading and completing coursework, are in beta and are subject to change.

4.1.2 Mighty Networks

Mighty Networks is the other platform our group recommended. Along with offering the same base features as Circle at a similar price point, it is centered around payment plans and subscriptions. This would allow Capacity to effectively implement a paid membership option to their community in the future. It also has a “roles” feature, allowing each person to be assigned a number of tags such as “Entrepreneur” or “Coach” which allows for people who have the same tags to connect with each other. A major strength Mighty Networks has over Circle is its sheer

robustness. Mighty Networks is tried and true, and very popular in the world of community building platforms. To elaborate, its mobile app on both IOS and Android has received very high praise, garnering 4.8 stars with 32,000+ reviews in the Apple app store. Arguably, Mighty Networks strongest feature is their customer support. We have observed that their development team is very engaged in the community and regularly releases updates to their mobile apps based on customer feedback. We also experienced their speedy customer support firsthand while setting up our trial network. We asked a question via the live chat feature on the Mighty Networks website and got a helpful response from their support team within the hour, with subsequent questions being answered within minutes. However, Mighty Networks isn't without weaknesses as it requires more time and effort to initially set up a network. We found that administrative tasks were less intuitive to perform on Mighty Networks, compared to the ease of using Circle.

4.2 Looking Ahead

4.2.1 Capacity's Future

After giving our recommendations to the Capacity team and board, they were excited about both Circle and Mighty Networks. They agreed to have a longer internal discussion about how best to proceed, and we made ourselves available to answer any questions during the deciding period. In a little less than a week, around the time of this paper's finalization, the Capacity team elected to further pursue Mighty Networks as the next step in expanding their network connectivity. We are excited to see how they implement our recommendations in the next few months as decisions continue to be made.

4.2.2 Future Projects

We recommend future Interactive Qualifying Projects continue expansion of Capacity, similar to the work done by the 2021 project group, who suggested an expansion blueprint to extend their reach beyond just the city of Zurich. With a more robust community hub, some of the challenges that come with expansion may be alleviated. Furthermore, students looking to complete a Major Qualifying Project in the Computer Science program could customize and improve Capacity's website to show concise and effective information promoting their programs and community.

5. Conclusion

Since 2015, Capacity has helped migrants and refugees enter the Swiss labor market through their mentoring-heavy programmes. They have committed immense time and energy to their mission and in supporting their community as best they can. However, as their complex community continues to expand, it has become increasingly difficult to manage. Our goal was to lift some of this weight off their shoulders by recommending a digital solution to increase the visibility of Capacity's entrepreneurs to potential audiences in order to support their growth. At the end of our project, we had successfully recommended two fitting platforms to Capacity after researching both in-depth and comparing them against the list of criteria we had gathered from our interviews.

We were limited when it came to reaching programme alumni, and our platform research was limited by the trials they offered. However, Capacity supported us by connecting us with many of their community members, 14 of whom we were able to successfully interview. Our interviews gave us enough information to develop an in-depth analysis of Capacity, and to be confident in our recommendations. We left the final decision on how to proceed to the Capacity team and board, and we are confident that our recommendations will guide them as they continue to grow and make a difference in the world.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Interview Consent Form

Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study

Investigator: Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Contact Information: gr-ZurichA22-Talent@wpi.edu

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Title of Research Study: Fostering Refugee and Migrant Talent Through Entrepreneurship:
Finding a Digital Solution for Capacity

Sponsor: Capacity

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree, however, you must be fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and any benefits, risks or discomfort that you may experience as a result of your participation. This form presents information about the study so that you may make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this interview is to gather information on one of several topics, such as: immigration, business marketing, and/or entrepreneurship.

Procedures to be followed: The interviews will be semi-structured; we will ask a few guiding questions, but you are free to answer as you wish. Interviews should last about twenty minutes, no more than half an hour.

Risks to study participants: The interview is up to you, and if at any time you want to stop the interview, we will immediately do so. Risks are minimal.

Benefits to research participants and others: If you are affiliated with Capacity, then participating in this interview will help us help your company.

Record keeping and confidentiality: Records of your participation in this study will be held confidential so far as permitted by law. However, the study investigators, the sponsor or its designee and, under certain circumstances, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Institutional Review Board (WPI IRB) will be able to inspect and have access to confidential data that identify you by name. Any publication or presentation of the data will not identify you.

Compensation or treatment in the event of injury: You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this statement. Risk of injury is minimal due to the nature of this study.

For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, or in case of research-related injury, contact:

One of the four researchers listed above in “Contact Information”, or:

IRB Manager Ruth McKeogh (Tel. 508 831- 6699, Email: irb@wpi.edu)

Human Protection Administrator Gabriel Johnson (Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: gjohnson@wpi.edu)

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty to you or any loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You may decide to stop participating in the research at any time without penalty or loss of other benefits. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit.

Additional clauses to Consent Agreements

Significant new findings or information, developed during the course of the research, may alter the subject's willingness to participate in the study. Any such findings will be promptly communicated to all research participants.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that your questions are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement.

Study Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Study Participant Name (Please print): _____

Signature of Person who explained this study: _____

Date: _____

7.2 Appendix B: Capacity Staff Interview Questions

- What is your role within the Capacity team?
- What visibility issues are your entrepreneurs currently having?
- Describe how you and your team use any digital platforms.
- What is your current data management system?
- What features would you like to see in your ideal platform?
- Who will have access to your ideal platform? Who will use the platform most often?
- What analytics would you like to see in the platform?
- Would you like some of the information on the platform to be available to the public? Do you plan on displaying any parts on your website?
- What is your vision for how the platform will be used?
- What information about your alumni and their companies would you like to see on the platform?
- How connected are you with your alumni? What systems do you have to stay in touch with them?
- How common is it for your entrepreneurs to have a website for their business? Do any of them do online sales?
- Would you like to integrate E-commerce with the Capacity platform or keep each entrepreneur's online business separate?
- Are you familiar with the Membership concept that was drafted? What are your thoughts on adding members to Capacity
- Regarding Salesforce, which role would it ideally serve?
- Regarding Google Classroom, do you have problems with it? What works very well?

- Regarding WhatsApp, what issues are you having with it? What works well?
- Is there a budget for using any premium software services? What would you consider expensive for Capacity?
- If you were to estimate a yearly budget number what would it be?

7.3 Appendix C: Capacity Alumni Interview Questions

- Describe your current relationship with Capacity.
- What is the best way to contact you for business matters (email, phone number, other)?
- What is the current process you go through when you want to update something about your business on Capacity's website? How long does it take?
- What visibility issues are you currently having?
- Has maintaining a relationship with Capacity benefitted you and your business?
- What information about your business do you believe would be beneficial for Capacity to have readily available?
- What information would you like Capacity donors and stakeholders to be able to more easily access?
- What information would you like the public to be able to more easily access?
- If given the opportunity to join a community building platform alongside other Capacity alumni entrepreneurs, would you use it?

7.4 Appendix D: Capacity Current Entrepreneur Interview Questions

- Describe your role within Capacity.
- What is the best way to contact you for business matters (email, phone number, other)?
- What issues, if any, have you encountered when communicating with members of Capacity?
- What information would you like the public to be able to more easily access?
- What information about your business do you believe would be beneficial for Capacity to have readily available?
- What information would you like Capacity donors and stakeholders to be able to more easily access?
- If given the opportunity to join a community building platform alongside other Capacity entrepreneurs, would you use it?

7.5 Appendix E: Capacity Partner and Donor Interview Questions

- Describe your role with Capacity.
- How long have you worked with Capacity?
- What is the best way to contact you for business matters (email, phone number, other)?
- What platform are they using at your company?
- What communication platform are you currently using to contact Capacity and their entrepreneurs?
- What visibility issues are Capacity's entrepreneurs currently having?
- What information would you like to have more easy access to regarding Capacity's alumni entrepreneurs and their businesses?
- How connected are you with Capacity's alumni? What systems do you have to stay in touch with them?
- What systems do you use to stay in touch with Capacity?
- Are there any noticeable issues with your current communication systems with Capacity?
- Are there any noticeable issues with your ability to gather more information on Capacity or its alumni?
- What type of platform would you be most likely to utilize? (database, community-building platform, etc.)
- What struggles, if any, have you faced in trying to get more information about Capacity (whether that be about the company itself, its entrepreneurs, or something else)?
- What features would you want in your ideal platform to interact with Capacity and their alumni?

7.6 Appendix F: Interview Summaries

Below is a summary of information obtained in each interview. Names have been redacted to preserve the interviewee's privacy.

Capacity Team Member interview conducted on September 2nd, 2022:

- Would like a two-way platform
- Both internal and external communications
- Following up with alumni can be difficult

Capacity Network Ally interview conducted on September 7th, 2022:

- Mainly uses a platform called Yammer
- Thinks email is most efficient (other platforms can confuse members)
- Would like to know more about the programmes, but doesn't need access to all info/channels
- Noted that personal emails (or at least, seemingly personal) emails get a better response than mass ones (helpful for inviting people to new platforms)

Capacity Access Member interview conducted on September 8th, 2022:

- Is very interested in a way to stay connected with Capacity after they graduate
- Wants a way to continue asking questions and getting help
- Said Facebook isn't commonly used in Switzerland
- Likes using Email and Whatsapp

Capacity Team Member interview conducted on September 8th, 2022:

- Emphasized the importance of automation; updating the website is hard for 1 person
- Wants an automated way to do business, like linking to a website, able to be updated by the entrepreneurs themselves
- Wants a platform with good analytics
- Thinks in-team communications are fine

Capacity Team Member interview conducted on September 9th, 2022:

- Was really focused on the outward reach of the platform
- Really liked the Facebook idea for the connectivity of it and how it can be easily managed
- Was worried about the buy in/engagement from people when it comes to moving platforms

Capacity Corporate Partner interview conducted on September 15th, 2022:

- Pointed out a big issue for [corporation] is responsiveness of entrepreneurs/maintaining contact
- Wants a more centralized place to get contact info or at least a more concise list of contact info and short descriptions on entrepreneurs
- Was in contact with a woman selling coffee sourced from Africa and wanted to get more people from [corporation] to buy but lost contact with entrepreneur
- Wants the platform to be very public and easy to find for corporate partners and the public alike

Capacity Corporate Partner interview conducted on September 21st, 2022:

- Was really enthusiastic about the website, said it was very helpful and it is the main place [corporation] looks for info
- Wants more up to date contact info to be able to reach out to entrepreneurs more easily

Capacity Board Member interview conducted on September 23rd, 2022:

- Currently Slack is very overwhelming. There are many channels and many notifications coming all at once
- Wants a "library" or "address book" where you can "shop" entrepreneurs; believes Capacity could do more to market their entrepreneurs
- Everything re: updating events and info is done manually by the team; the alumni/entrepreneurs cannot do it themselves, gets overwhelming for the team

Capacity Board Member interview conducted on September 26th, 2022:

- Biggest concern is wanting a platform that can handle data management such as automatic update (maybe from a form)
- Concerned about security and platforms that sell data

Capacity Team Member interview conducted on September 27th, 2022:

- Wants a platform that centralizes all the platforms that they are currently spread out across
- Said that Capacity absolutely has the budget for most premium services we can find

- Is willing to put in the man hours to get NGO pricing if available once our team is gone

Capacity Board Member written survey conducted on September 29th, 2022:

- Visibility issues include lack of local contacts in their area of work, lack of confidence in reaching out, lack of familiarity with social media as a communications tool, lack of design skills and related things to make good flyers, SM posts, etc., that attract a Swiss audience
- Tension between remaining true to their cultural heritage versus making something that looks 'entrepreneurial/start-uppy'
- Bit of a 'blind leading the blind' situation, in that none of the team really have a lot of previous experience working with, and especially not setting up digital platforms

Capacity Board Member interview conducted on September 30th, 2022:

- Doesn't check the group WhatsApp on a regular basis because they have too many other WhatsApp channels related to work
- Unsure how data is stored in Capacity
- Would like to eliminate all other current platforms and just use one
- Understands Google Drive will still probably be necessary, would rather have a community-building solution than a cloud/file organization one

Capacity Team Member interview conducted on September 30th, 2022:

- Notices a lot of redundancy because of a lack of organization; three documents for the same thing

- Has a hard time connecting with alumni after the program ends
- Emphasizes the need for the entrepreneurs to update their own profiles; gets difficult constantly needing to go through a middleman
- Wants a well-functioning event calendar

Capacity Entrepreneur written survey conducted on September 30th, 2022:

- Communications issues include delayed response, lack of response. Connections about business matters on personal /casual communication platforms (Whats-App)
- Lack of information in calendar items (No Zoom links, addresses)
- Lack of clear direction on Homework assignments (issues with UI and intuitiveness)