# Collective Wisdom: A Community Study of r/LifeProTips

Aditya Annavajjala, Ayushi Mathur, Poojita Garg

Georgia Institute of Technology

# Abstract

r/LifeProTips (LPT) is a popular subreddit with a vision to improve members' lives in one way or another. The subreddit aims to enable members to share "pro tips" spanning various aspects of life, including but not limited to Productivity, Finance, Electronics, Social life, Traveling, etc. It is one of Reddit's most popular subreddits, ranked at #27 by size out of more than 100,000 active subreddits (top 0.00025% of Reddit). On any given day, it has an average of 10,000 online users. It is a 13-year-old community that grew from 1 million members to 22.4 million in the last decade. It is a very active subreddit with an average of about 30+ posts/day. Anyone can post a life pro tip, upvote/downvote a post, or contribute to the conversation via comment threads. In this paper, we use Amy Jo Kim's design principles as a lens for examining LPT as an online community. Further, we conduct participant observation spanning 30+ hours, interviewing nine members of varying experiences, backgrounds, and roles. We learn that many of the members find value in the shared life pro tips and appreciate the subreddit's welcoming, inclusive, and constructive environment. We find that rigorous enforcement of community rules and code of conduct along with active community participation and community moderation (through upvote/downvote) are crucial to the success of the community. These factors have a direct impact on LPT's success, and it surviving for more than a decade by growing 20x with a relatively small moderator team of 10 moderators.

# Introduction

r/LifeProTips is one of the most popular subreddits on Reddit with a a total of 22.4 million members and an average daily active user count 10, 000 / day. It is ranked at #27 by size out of more than 100, 000 active subreddits making it among the top 0.00025% subreddits. The stated vision of LPT is "Tips that improve your life in one way or another.". To that end, members post "pro tips" that they deem worthy of sharing with the community. All posts on LPT are required to have the prefix "LPT" in their title and each post is required to have a relevant and meaningful description. Posts are also required to have an associated "flair" which is the category that the LPT belongs to. LPT supports posts associated with the following flairs / categories:

1. Clothing

2. Careers & Work

3. Social

4. Productivity

5. Traveling

6. Home & Garden

7. Finance

8. Electronics

9. Computers

10. Country/Region Specific Tip

11. Arts & Culture

12. Food & Drink

13. Miscellaneous

14. Requests

Of the categories above, Requests is a relatively new addition to LPT and it allows members to request (seek) a "life pro tip" for a situation that they are in instead of sharing a pro

tip. It is different from the default usage of sharing "life pro tips" as it involves seeking pro tips for any given scenario. A request is required to begin with the prefix "LPT Request" and as of October 1st, 2023 LPT Requests are only allowed to be posted on Fridays. The change was enforced recently to reduce the community being overwhelmed by request posts, deviating from it's intended purpose.

Any post without a proper description, without the "LPT" or "LPT Request" prefix or without an associated flair is immediately removed. Additionally, posts on topics such as Religion, Politics, Relationships, Mental Health etc. are not allowed and are removed immediately. LPT is managed by a modest moderator team of 10 human moderators. LPT is a 13 year old subreddit and has grown consistently over the years from 1 million members in 2013 to 22.4 million in 2023. The subreddit not only managed to survive for 13 years successfully but is in fact a thriving community thoroughly rooted in it's vision, constructive and inclusive values.

LPT functions as a third place as defined in Ray Oldenburg's "The Great Good Place" [8]. A third place is an informal public gathering place, differing from the first place (home) and second place (work) that offers a congenial environment.

a. **LPT offers a neutral ground**: LPT offers a neutral ground for member interaction by offering an unbiased, open platform built on the tenets of mutual respect.

b. **LPT acts as leveller**: LPT bridges gaps in age, nationality, social and economic status and acts as a leveller for meaningful and constructive conversation. As part of our interviewers, we were able to interview members spanning ages 22-74 years, originating from multiple countries, and with varying interests and purpose for being on the platform.

c. **LPT is accessible**: LPT is one of the most accessible subreddits on Reddit. There are no barriers to entry or requirements for membership. No one or a group of people is excluded

from joining.

d. **LPT is inclusive**: LPT is inclusive by design. Racist and homophobic comments, doxxing, abusive language, personally attacking users are all prohibited and are grounds for an immediate ban. In fact, LPT is a safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community, a status that sets them apart from the majority of communities hosted on reddit. The lead moderator we interviewed Minifig81 says

> I'm particularly proud of the LGBTQ+ safe haven status and the fact we have a
> zero tolerance policy. Break a rule, and you are banned.

e. **LPT is plain**: As a subreddit within reddit, LPT conforms to many of the design aspects of reddit. It is plain in its layout, color scheme and overall visual presentation. Even though it has a custom theme available, it adds minimal features including a different color scheme and a banner image.



Figure 1: Custom banner image of r/LifeProTips

f. **LPT has regular patrons**: While many of the 22 million members are primarily lurkers, LPT has quite a few regulars. Regulars are critical to conversations and the overall activity on the subreddit. Regulars are often the ones that active provide "life pro tips" and provide constructive comments on others posts. In our interviews we have found that the regulars don't find a lot of value in the tips themselves but their presence and participation is important to set the overall tone of the community.

g. **Conversation is the main activity on LPT**: Once a members posts a "life pro tip", conversation ensues. Users comment on the usefulness or the uselessnes of a pro tip, provide alternate tips, provide examples of instances where the pro tip is applicable or not.

Overall, LPT is a community that is inclusive, warm, constructive, uplifting and supportive to its members.

# Related Work

Horne et al.(2017) [5] analyzed the social signals that drive online discussions of Reddit communities. The authors used a large number of sentiment, relevance, content analysis features including some novel features customized to reddit to analyze thow the discussion prevail and scoring of posts are determined in some of the popular reddit communitites. Although we are also analyzing a specfic reddit community, our focus is on how the code of conduct shapes its culture and how well the community lives up to its vision. Chandrasekharan et al.(2022)[4] examined the effects of community moderation on reddit. The study sheds light on the effect of quarantining to limit the toxic posts. r/LifeProTips is a heavily modertated community and we are interested in deeply analyzing what strategies work in favour or against in making the community a popular subreddit. Addiitonally papers like by Carpenter et al.(2018)[3], studies r/Teachers online space for its ability to give and seek advice by its community members. The paper presents some interesting analysis about how the most top-rated responses sometimes provided technical and/or emotion management advice in line with the nature of the original advice-seeking post. Parallely, we look into how knowledge sharing works in the context of r/LifeProTips as well as in particular how this knowledge transfers from online to offline world.

# Methods

The goal of the paper is to understand the underlying factors that contribute to the success of r/LifeProTips, a popular subreddit that has been active for 13 years. To that end, the authors conduct over 30 hours of participant observations. The authors actively engaged in the community including posting "life pro tips", upvoting/downvoting posts, engaging in active discussion via comments. The authors also interviewed a total of 9 participants with varying backgrounds in age, nationality and varying social roles and interests. The interviews are semi structured in nature and span text, audio, and video interviews using techniques described by I.E. Seidman in the book "Interviewing as Qualitative Research" [9].

As part of their participant observations, the authors maintained field notes. For member interviews, the authors focused on collecting opinions and information from members with varying social roles including lurkers, new comers, regulars, and leaders (moderators) [6]. Each interview lasted a maximum of 90 minutes and was transcribed using otter.ai [1] and sanitized by the interviewer after. The authors also a brief quantitative analysis to understand how a change to the posting rules affected user behaviour during the course of the study.

The authors found factors contributing to the sustenance and success of the website, it's active user engagement and retention, and what the effect the code of conduct and it's enforcement has on shaping member behaviour and community culture at large.

We respect our interviewee's privacy and only include real names when they explicitly asked us to. Below is a list of interviewees with their aliases and a brief sketch of each interviewee.

# Interview Subjects

**Repulsive_Plum_2924**

Repulsive_Plum_2924, a 21-year-old student from the United States. He has been an active member of LPT for six years. His journey on Reddit began during his mid-teens when he joined the platform with a desire to explore the diverse range of communities it offers. Over time, he discovered the LPT subreddit and found it to be a source of useful insights and practical advice that he found useful from time to time.

He participates in the community by upvoting content that he finds valuable, and occasionally downvoting repetitive or unoriginal posts. Notably, the subreddit has taught him valuable insights on how to save money on groceries through effective planning, budgeting, and smart shopping. He also appreciates the emotional and interpersonal advice users share, which has given him a deeper understanding of handling various aspects of life.

**Sinesquaredtheta**

Sinesquaredtheta is a regular at LPT with a history of seven years of participation. His tenure is indicative of his commitment to the platform. Within the community, he is an engaged user who regularly contributes by posting, commenting, and upvoting content.

He takes an interest in the practical advice shared within the community. Over the years years, he has successfully implemented numerous tips and suggestions in his personal life. His involvement and practical application of advice showcase his enthusiasm for making the most of the collective knowledge and wisdom LPT provices.

**Rasenpal**

rasenpal, a 24-year-old student, has been an member of the LPT for five years. As a student, he values the life advice shared within the subreddit, finding it a valuable resource for self-improvement and personal growth. Whether it is tips on time management, productivity,

or practical life hacks, rasenpal has absorbed wisdom that has positively impacted his day-to-day life.

He engages with the community by leaving comments on posts and contributing to discussions. His contributions help foster a sense of community and ensure valuable advice rises to the forefront of the subreddit. His active involvement, including upvoting and downvoting content, showcases his commitment to maintaining the quality and relevance of the content shared within the community. In doing so, he not only benefits from the collective knowledge but also contributes to the growth and well-being of LPT.

**Blank-Cheque**

Blank-Cheque is a 22 year old male from the United States. He has been active on reddit since the age of 11 and was a moderator on reddit from ages 18 to 20. He was an active moderator of LPT 2 years ago and is still one of the moderators. He is not an active participant of LPT. He used to browse LPT while he was a moderator but does not browse LPT anymore. He only views LPT posts that appear on his feed. He maintained that LPT is by and large a very boring sub that adds little to no value to him. He mentioned that most of the 22.4 million members on mostly scrolling through LPT posts that appear on their feed and not necessarily browsing LPT specifically. He takes a personal interest in discussion subreddits and meme subreddits and spends most of his time on them.

As a moderator, Blank-Chequeprovided a unique perspective into behind the scenes of reddit moderations including the use of the Auto Moderator and custom moderator bots. During the interview, he recalled an instance of a silly LPT that didn't need to be a post, if members used their common sense to tackle everyday problems.

**Bobo4037**

Bobo4037 is a 70+ year old male based in the United States. He joined reddit in Septem-

ber 2014 i.e. 9 years ago. Like most people on LPT, he doesn't specifically browse LPT but interacts with posts that appear on his feed. He engages with LPT primarily for the entertainment value especially when there are LPT posts that provide complicated solutions to simple problems. He remembered a post about closing a fridge door from a few months ago where the posted pro tip was to remove a grill from the bottom of the fridge and adjust the height of the front portion of the fridge to be higher than the back of the fridge. For this pro tips he said

> I thought that was absolutely ridiculous, but I didn't say that. What I said was "or, you can remember to close the doors, which takes a lot less work. Most refrigerators these days have alarms that go off when the door is left open more than a few minutes

He is primarily active on sports based subreddits including NFL, MLB, NBA and NHL, NY Mets and Yankees, NY Jets and NY rangers. He also follows European soccer especially La Liga, FC Barcelona, and EPL on reddit. He spends a lot of time on r/beatles, r/oldschoolcool and r/askoldpeople answering questions about the 60s and 70s and sharing his experiences.

**Vedant**

Vedant is a 29 year old male based in the United States, originally from India. He completed his Masters in Electrical and Communication Engineering (ECE) from Georgia Institute of Technology. He has been an active redditor for 7 years and is primarily a lurker. He browses reddit for technology tips (r/linuxtechtips, r/pctips), gaming content (r/games, r/pcgaming), and memes (r/therewasanattempt, r/aww). He doesn't actively browse through LPT but has found useful tips (through the feed) that he has been able to apply in his everyday life. He is of the opinion that LPT is a helpful and friendly sub and the rules and their enforcement have a huge role in maintaining the friendly environment on the subreddit

> I think generally speaking, the sub is pretty helpful and friendly. Almost all the comments to any of the post are either adding some value or adding more evidence to support the LPT itself. From my experience, I haven't come across any bad actors or trolls on this sub, which could stem from the fact that the moderators have done a pretty good job at maintaining the sub moderation. In the rules section I could see that the list of rules has been well thought out and I think it covers a lot of scenarios and prevents harmful behaviour

**Minifig81**

Minifig81is the lead moderator of LPT. He is 42 years old and has been on the moderator team for the past 11 years, several of which he spent as a lead moderator. He is also the moderator of multiple other subreddits such as r/movies, r/Awwducational, r/ShittyLifeProTips, r/cats etc. The interview was as a synchronous text interaction over reddit's "Send Message" feature. He was very passionate about moderating and proud of the fact that LPT is a respectful and inclusive community. He mentioned that LPT is recognized as a safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community on reddit, a recognition of which he was very proud of.

We found that the process to add a rule or amend a rule is democratic and while the lead moderator has the veto power, it is hardly ever used. As a member and moderator of LPT for 11 years, Minifig81provided a unique perspective into the grown and evolution of community from 1 million to 22.4 million users. He was of the opinion that while there is a good amount of repition in "pro tips" over the years, a lot of the "pro tips" still provide value to the members.

**Greentea0108**

The interviewee did not reveal their age or name. This interview was also text based on the reddit "chat" feature. From the interviewee, it was evident that the interviewee was a regular member of the community. One of their recent posts about "long distance relationship", the interviewee shared their experience of witnessing some "weird" suggestion but overall mentioned their experience as a community member in this subreddit to be meaningful. The interviewee mentioned stressed on the fact that the reason they like this community is because of its clean content and strict moderation. However they mentioned that they don't use reddit as a social networking platform to make connections with other redditors, they still like to read about life hacks in this community. As per the interviewee, they learned productivity tips and about budgeting through the posts on this subreddit.

**ExNihiloAdInfinitum**

This interview seemed to be very careful about their identity hence kept every detail anonymous including their email id in the consent form. However, in some of their answers, they indicated that they were relatively older than the average population of the redditors hence insinuating towards being an experienced and elderly person. The interviewee is also one of the top 0.1% of contributors to the LPT subreddit (by karma). The interview took place in the written form using the "Chat" feature of reddit. The interviewee revealed some

interesting insights from a lurkers perspective. The interviewee also mentioned the subreddit to be more useful for the younger generation on reddit as it contains many practical tips but many of the obvious one's for older people. The motivation about using this subreddit as explained by the interviewee was mostly for entertainment purposes along with giving tips in the form of comments of other LPT requests.

# Evaluation of r/LifeProTips based on design principles

One of the ways to evaluate an online community is using Amy Jo Kim's timeless design principles for community building [7]. The design principles include the following:

- Does it have a clear purpose?

- Does it have distinct and extensible gathering places?

- Do member profiles evolve over time?

- Does the site provide a wide range of roles with increasing involvement?

- Does the site promote effective leadership?

- Does the site have a clear yet flexible code of conduct?

- Does the site organize and promote cyclical events?

- Does the site allow for user created groups, contests, and events?

- Does the site integrate online and real world such as celebrating important personal events?

We analyse our online community r/LifeProTips through the lens of Amy Jo Kim's design principles to understand and examine the community in detail. We provide detailed context of each of the questions below

**1) Does the community have a clear PURPOSE?**

LPT has a clear purpose of sharing "tips that improve your life in one way or another". There are broadly two kinds of posts a. an LPT and b. an LPT Request. The former (a.) is when a member shares a pro tip with the rest of the community and this is the primary

purpose of the community. The latter (b.) is a request for a pro tip by a member dubbed LPT Request where members seek a pro tip from the community. LPT requests are a relatively recent addition to the community.

The audience of the community is broadly anyone on reddit. As one of the most popular subreddits and one of the largest by size, LPT posts often appear in user's feeds even if they are not members of LPT. As a large community with a very broad scope, LPT attracts a lot of lurkers who browse LPT without much interaction except upvoting/downvoting. Through participant observation we found that a large portion of the members are lurkers and non regulars interacting with very few posts and commenting sparsely, being passive consumers. Members browse LPT to get life hacks for a specific topic or situation that they need tips for and once the need is satisfied, don't necessarily stay active. Our interviewee Vedant says:

> Even when I used it before, I might have used it for a couple of specific topics and as soon as my needs were met, I probably stopped using it

To the best of our knowledge, there are no explicitly identifiable sub groups within LPT. LPT caters to a broad set of audience with varying social roles.

As a subreddit, LPT inherits a lot of the visual design, style, and user interface from Reddit. Subreddit level customizations are minimal and are limited to a banner image and a change in the default color scheme. The banner of LPT contains the name of the subreddit, it's vision and visuals involving the reddit's mascot with a light bulb on the left and just a light bulb on the right. It signifies a "light bulb going off" that represents a great idea that is then shared with members of the subreddit via an LPT post. As an open community hosted on reddit it is also viewable by those not on Reddit (without a reddit user account) and hence two light bulbs, one with reddit's mascot (representing users of reddit) and the other without (for non redditors browsing through reddit). The customized default color is

Yellow as opposed to the default Blue on reddit.

Like the rest of reddit, LPT's visual design and structure is very plain helping shift the user's attention on the content of the posts and conversation almost immediately. The origin story of LPT is not documented on the wiki and so it's hard to tell who started the subreddit. What we know through our interviews is that it grew from a modest sized community to one of reddit's largest communities and in that process has stayed true to its vision with little deviation.

## 2) Have distinct, extensible GATHERING PLACES

The concept of "distinct, extensible gathering places" in online communities refers to having dedicated spaces within the community where users can interact, share content, and engage in discussions. These gathering places are typically designed to serve specific purposes or interests, allowing for a more organized and focused exchange of information.

LPT does not have a dedicated physical location for gathering. Instead, the subreddit functions as a virtual gathering place for its community members.

Here is an elaboration of this idea: While r/LifeProTips does not have separate, specialized sections or forums, as seen on some other online communities, the subreddit itself fulfills the role of a gathering place. It serves as a centralized hub where users from various backgrounds and interests come together to share their valuable life advice and insights. In this virtual gathering place, users post their tips, experiences, and questions, creating a dynamic space for interaction. Within the subreddit, each post acts as a distinct gathering point for specific topics or advice. Users can submit posts about a wide range of life tips, from productivity and personal development to practical skills and general guidance. This diversity of content makes each post a gathering place for individuals with a shared interest in that particular tip or topic. Additionally, the comment sections of these posts become sub-gathering places where users

engage in discussions, provide feedback, ask for clarification, or share their own experiences related to the original post. These comment threads extend the gathering places within the subreddit, allowing for in-depth conversations and exchanging additional knowledge and insights.

**3) Have PROFILES that evolve over time?** LPT and broadly Reddit has profiles that have evolved over time. As evidenced by our interview cohort, members have been using reddit and browsing LPT for anywhere between half a decade to more than a decade.

As a potential user, reddit only requires the user to provide a valid email address and choose a username. The barriers of entry to reddit are really low. Potential users need to have access to the internet, have an email id and an electronic device to browse reddit on (a smartphone, a laptop or a PC). With the vast majority of the content on reddit being textual the bandwidth requirements are also lower compared to other online communities built around audio and video media. Additionally, reddit offers a premium subscription for an ad-free experience and additional customizations to avatars and app icons and select access to the subreddit r/lounge. Very few redditors actually pay for the subscription.

As a member, minimal information is collected and includes gender (optional) and topics of interest. Topics of interest are used to suggest relevant sub reddits within reddit. Users get to customize their profile by choosing a username, a display name, a profile picture, an avatar and a banner image. Users can further customize various privacy, visibility, and notification related settings for a smooth and safe experience.

Profiles evolve over time through karma points and specifically through subreddit karma points. Users earn karma points by contributing a useful post that gets upvotes or by contributing a useful comment on an existing post. Posts and comments can also be downvoted by members effectively lowering the karma points. It is also possible to connect their account

with other social media sites to cross post, although it's a feature that most people do not use and do not like.

Karma points are one way to establish value within profiles. Whenever a user's post or a comment is upvoted their karma points increase. When they are downvoted, their karma points decrease. In general, a high karma point often means that they are active on reddit and a relatively old account whereas the reverse is not always true.

All activity of a user is logged automatically and is publicly visible to other redditors. There is no way to opt out of this to keep one's profile completely private. Profile history can be viewed by navigating to the user's profile and contains information about the posts they have made, comment interactions, and the list of communities within reddit that they are a part of. The profile history is also crucial for human moderators to identify intent and establish whether bad behaviour (trolling etc.) is a one off incident or a pattern helping them making the decision to ban or merely give a warning.

### 4) Promote effective LEADERSHIP?

Users, including regulars and more experienced members, often take it upon themselves to assist newcomers (newbies) who may have questions or need guidance. This informal support is rooted in the willingness of the community to engage in conversations that not only share life pro tips but also help others navigate the platform effectively. Regular users also play a crucial role in training new members informally. Through ongoing interactions and discussions, experienced community members share their insights, best practices, and the unwritten rules of engagement. This informal mentorship helps newbies acclimate to the community's norms, contributing to a positive and productive atmosphere.

Moderators within r/LifeProTips exhibit leadership through coaching new moderators. This structured mentorship process ensures that the team of moderators remains effective

in managing the community. Experienced moderators guide and educate newcomers about the responsibilities, expectations, and decision-making processes required to maintain the subreddit's quality and purpose.

Furthermore, the shared code of conduct provides clear guidelines and expectations for all members, from newcomers to seasoned users, regarding their behavior, interactions, and contributions. This code of conduct helps maintain a respectful and productive environment by setting standards for communication and engagement. Moderators and regulars often refer to these rules to address any violations and provide leadership by upholding the values of the community.

**5) Have a clear-yet-flexible CODE OF CONDUCT?** LPT has a clear code of conduct expressed via

a. r/LifeProTips rules - that appear as a panel to the right on the subreddit and continue to appear on any post within the subreddit. It is prominently placed and cannot be missed. This consists of a list of bullet points summarising the code of conduct.

b. Additionally, LPT has a detailed code of conduct in their Wiki page under "Rules and Guidelines". This forms a more detailed version of the rules covering all activity on the community. Policies for bans and ban appeals, for removal and reporting of posts etc.

The code of conduct reflects the value system embedded within the community. The moderator team enforces the code of conduct using a mixture of auto moderation and human moderation.

As per the code of conduct of the sub "No rude, offensive, racist, homophobic, sexist, aggressive, or hateful posts/comments" hence being LGBTQ+ friendly. Additionally while interviewing with the lead moderator (P1), the moderating team was very proud of this rule of their subreddit. There is a strict ban policy for any violation of the code of conduct.

There are two types of bans including, first warning which can be removed by appealing to the moderators. However, if necessary, permanent bans (perma bans) are given which cannot be appealed and which lead to revoking the posting and commenting privileges on LPT. To promote structure in the community, only two types of posts are allowed which are distinguished by the type of the suffix in the heading of the post. These two types are LPT and LPT Request denoting whether the person is giving or requesting a life pro tip respectively. Another method used to enhance the structure in the community is using mandatory flairs for every post. The flairs are the categories that help filter the posts out as well for a new user. Some of the flairs include clothing, career, social, productivity, etc. To keep the community posts away from any controversial statements, one of the community rules prevent posting anything that is of the topic religion, politics, relationships, law, medicine, mental health, etc. the subreddit allows not safe for work content but with appropriate tags of NSFW.

**6) Organize and promote CYCLIC EVENTS?**

In the context of r/LifeProTips, the community organizes and promotes cyclic events to enhance the user experience and maintain the quality of the subreddit. One notable example of a cyclic event within r/LifeProTips is the introduction of "LPT Fridays." This scheduled event allows users to make request posts exclusively on Fridays, with a moderation bot to remove posts made on other days. This change was implemented starting from October 1st 2023 with the aim of preventing an overwhelming influx of request posts.

The concept of "LPT Fridays" serves several purposes within the community. First and foremost, it provides a regular and anticipated event for users to celebrate and share their life tips, making Fridays a focal point for engaging with the community. It creates a specific time for users to come together and contribute their insights, fostering a sense of unity and participation.

Furthermore, "LPT Fridays" are crucial in maintaining order and content quality. Restricting posting to a specific day enables moderators to control the content within the subreddit better and ensures that posts align with the community's guidelines. This approach not only promotes quality content but also makes the task of moderation more manageable.

**7) Provide a RANGE OF ROLES with increasing involvement?**

Roles within the "r/LifeProTips" subreddit can be categorized according to their level of engagement and distinct responsibilities, each offering a unique set of attributes and capabilities.

**Visitor**: At the most basic level, visitors possess limited power, primarily focusing on the ability to read and view posts and comments within the subreddit. Visitors can access all publicly available posts and comments, enabling them to read and observe ongoing discussions. While their actions are relatively restricted, visitors can still interact by upvoting or downvoting posts and comments. Visitors remain anonymous readers with no formal status within the subreddit. As unregistered users, they cannot progress to different roles unless they create an account.

**New Member**: As new members, individuals enjoy more power than visitors. They can read and interact with the subreddit's content, although their customization options remain limited. New members can engage in discussions, comment on posts, and participate in upvoting and downvoting. Additionally, they can make limited profile customizations. Their status within the subreddit can be enhanced through active participation, meaningful contributions, and positive interactions. Advancement to the "Regular" role becomes possible through sustained engagement and valued contributions. There are no explicit "New Member" or "Regular" role tags within LPT.

**Regular**: Regular members possess more authority within the subreddit. They can read,

comment, post, customize their profiles, and create new posts - same as new members. They can access all publicly available features and content, including the ability to both participate in and initiate discussions. Their actions encompass reading, commenting, posting, profile customization, upvoting, downvoting, and the capacity to report content for moderation. They can elevate their status by providing consistent and valuable content, aiding fellow community members, and garnering positive feedback. Progression to the "Leader" or "Moderator" role may be attained by establishing themselves as knowledgeable and respected contributors and depending on the need for more moderators within LPT.

**Leader**: Leaders or Moderators carry significant power and responsibilities. They can read, comment, post, customize, host discussions, set subreddit policies, and assist with moderation tasks. These individuals can engage in various actions, such as reading, commenting, posting, customizing, hosting discussions, establishing and enforcing policies, and voting. Moderators can be identified from their profile, which shows the list of communities that they are moderate. Their status is earned through consistent contributions, the demonstration of leadership qualities, and active participation in the subreddit's governance.

### 9) Integrate what's online with the REAL WORLD?

r/LifeProTips (LPT) is dedicated to exchanging advice and insights for enhancing one's daily life. The occasion of Cake Day provides LPT members with a beautiful opportunity to not only commemorate their journey on Reddit but also make a substantial contribution to the LPT community.

Cake Day offers a moment of introspection and contemplation. Members can use this occasion to share narratives about how their engagement with LPT has catalyzed personal growth, facilitated learning, or inspired positive life changes. This personal touch can motivate others on their ongoing path of self-improvement.

Although LPT may not traditionally host shared or personal events, the celebration of Cake Day presents a distinctive avenue for members to mark their Reddit journey and enhance the community by disseminating invaluable life tips and insights.

# Research Questions

In order to study the community and to better understand the realization of the community's vision we view the LPT subreddit through the following research questions:

1. Does r/LifeProTips facilitate knowledge transfer from online to offline world?

2. How do the community rules shape the culture of r/LifeProTips and user behaviour?

We answer these research questions through a mixture of participant observation, semi-structured interviews of members and analysis based on readings relating to various aspects of online communities.

## 1. Does r/LifeProTips facilitate knowledge transfer from online to offline world?

This research question delves into r/LifeProTips' alignment with its mission of sharing valuable insights within the community and serving as a platform for exchanging practical life advice. It seeks to illuminate the role of r/LifeProTips in enabling the dissemination of valuable knowledge and life-enhancing guidance. Additionally, this question explores personal development of users through LPT, investigating whether active engagement in the subreddit results in changes in their daily behaviors. It also underscores the trust and reliance placed by users on advice received from online communities, providing insights into community management and content quality.

> In online communities, we see the power of collective knowledge-building. People
> come together to share their insights, experiences, and expertise, creating a body
> of shared knowledge. - Amy Bruckman in Design and Social Behavior[2]

The impact of r/LifeProTips on users' daily lives is demonstrable, with numerous examples of tangible changes in offline behaviors and decision-making processes. Interviewees

have shared instances where they found substantial value in the content on LifeProTips and successfully implemented these tips in their real-world experiences. For instance, user Repulsive_Plum_2924 recounted how reading a post on kindness, a concept already familiar to him, served as a constant reminder to exhibit more compassion in his daily interactions.

> Posts like people who are kind, they are going out of their way to be kind. If someone is being kind, you should reciprocate that; that is something struck out to me

This example underscores the subreddit's role in reinforcing positive behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, active participation in r/LifeProTips empowered him with practical everyday tips, such as efficient grocery shopping techniques that save time and money. This illustrates that the subreddit not only fosters personal growth regarding social behavior but also imparts practical skills that can be directly applied offline. These experiences are emblematic of the broader impact of LifeProTips in enabling users to make informed and beneficial choices in their daily lives. Another user Rasanpal talked about the value he found in this subreddit and that is what draws himt o this community

> I think it has definitely made some level of impact to where I find it worthy of subscribing to that subreddit

Another user, 'sinsquaredtheta,' shared how they learned practical tips, like connecting to Wi-Fi with specific commands in public places when the password is unknown. This knowledge proved invaluable in various real-life scenarios, highlighting the subreddit's practical utility and role in enhancing users' offline behaviours. He also spoke about how he learnt tips that helped him in his hobbies.

I'm someone who listens to a lot of books and being able to get those audio books on Libby as opposed to having to pay Amazon made a huge difference. I learnt this from LPT.

r/LifeProTips effectively facilitates knowledge transfer and learning among its users, leading to tangible changes in offline behaviors and decision-making. Users have experienced personal growth and practical benefits through their participation in the subreddit, illustrating its impact on its community members.

In knowledge-building discourse, a group of people all contribute ideas, to try to create new knowledge together. One person contributes a new idea, and others critique it. Over time, the group finds things they agree on, and this is new knowledge.

- Amy Bruckman in How does the internet change how we think? [2]

Interviewee Rasenpal said,

Some of them were crazy, some of them normal, and so they motivated me to actually make change.

While many of the users we interviewed found found value in the subreddit, some of them did not. LPT's generic nature, repetitive posts, and it's very wide scope makes it harder to keep members engaged, especially at the scale that LPT operates at (22+ million members). Our interviewee Blank-Cheque who was also an active moderator a few years ago says

Sure there are a few interesting LPTs now and then but a lot of them personally are boring.

In the same interview, Blank-Cheque also mentioned how many of the tips provided are very obvious or basic common sense

a lot of the LPTs are either very obvious or provide a complicated solution to a simple problem. Most of them are common sense.

Our other interviewee Bobo4037 agrees with Blank-Cheque . As a 70+ year old man Bobo4037 gets very little value from LPT. Bobo4037 contributes comments once in a while but mostly browses LPT for entertainment.

LPT can be viewed as the subreddit equivalent of a self-help book. Not everybody likes it and derives value from it. But to the people who are into improving and optimizing little things in their live, LPT does help form better habits, find value, and a community.

To conclude, we find that pro tips and advice communicated on LPT does translate to the offline world. Many of the members we interviewed find value on the platform. Everyone agrees that LPT is a safe and inclusive space with zero tolerance for hate and trolling. Some of our interviewees even noted that LPT is one of the most positive subreddits they have come across. While the community has evolved dramatically over the past decade, lead moderator Minifig81 who has been around for the whole journey comments that while he's seen all kinds of tips being repeated, once in a while a tips will surprise him and make him learn something completely new!

**2. How does community rules shape the culture in r/lifeprotips?** r/LifeProTips is heavily moderated community with strict rules to be followed while posting. The moderator team does a great job of enforcing the rules and code of conduct communicated in the subreddit's wiki.

Moderators use a mixture of Auto Moderation and human moderation to ensure high quality of posts (Prefix requirements, detailed descriptions, associated flairs). Posts that do not satisfy the requirements are almost immediately removed by the AutoModerator bot. We found through our participant observation and reading about moderation on reddit in general

that about 70% of moderator interventions are by the Auto Moderator. The remaining are a mixture of human moderators and custom made bots.

Aside from sanity checks on descriptions, prefix requirements, and flairs, moderators actively remove comments with hateful content, personally attack members and an overall negative vibe are removed. Members violating the code of conduct are banned immediately as a warning. A ban can be appealed and primarily functions as a warning. Repeat offenders are permanently banned (perma-ban) from the subreddit losing posting and commenting privileges (they can still view the posts).

The strict enforcement of community rules impacts user behaviour directly on r/LifeProTips. During the course of our observation, the moderators introduced "LPT Request Fridays". While the purpose of LPT was for people to share pro tips "LPT Request" was added as an additional category to allow people to request a life pro tip for a situation they need help with. With the addition of "LPT Request", the number of LPT Request posts sky rocketed and very soon the subreddit was flooded with request posts, significantly deviating from it's original purpose. LPT Requests were averaging at 40+ requests / week. To remedy the situation, they introduced "LPT Request Fridays" allowing members to request for life pro tips only on Fridays. This resulted in a marked change in the number of request pro tips posts reducing by 50% Fig. 2 as soon as the change was enforced.

Studying LPT raises interesting questions on how users present themselves compared to the other communities that they are a part of, that do not have the same values as LPT or do not enforce the code of conduct as strictly (r/aww, r/memes, r/shittlylifeprotips, r/unethicallifeprotips etc.)

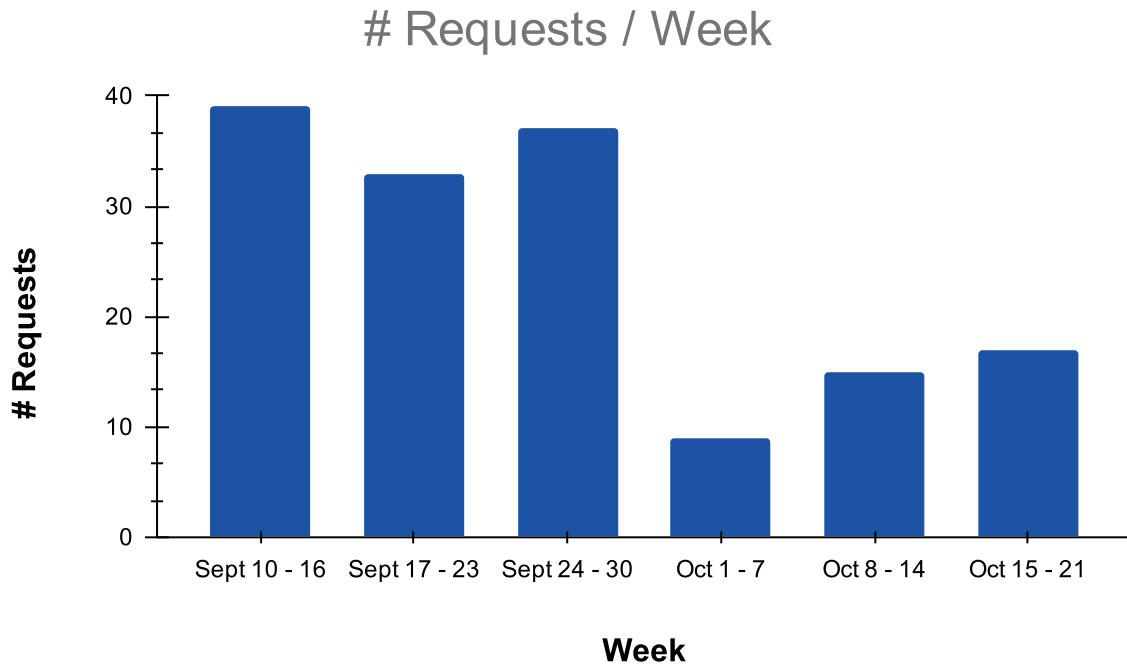Being inclusive and maintaining a constructive environment are underlying values of r/LifeProTips

## # Requests / Week

Figure 2: "#LPT Requests/ week before and after introducing LPT Request Fridays"

According to Minifig81 , the lead moderator of r/LifeProTips:

> I'm particularly proud of the LGBTQ+ safe haven status and the fact we have a
> zero tolerance policy. Break a rule, you are banned

Our interviewee Bobo4037 echoes the underlying behaviour expected from members of
LPT

> I try to treat everyone with respect. I know not everyone has the same opinion,
> and sometimes I will reply by saying "let's agree to disagree."

> I never downvote anyone for having a different opinion from mine, the only time
> I downvote people is if they try to pass something off as a fact, that is not a fact.
> For example, the Earth is flat, or Trump won the election in 2020.

Our other interviewees agree too. Even the members from our interviews who did not
derive much value from the community (Bobo4037) or the ones who though LPT is a boring

subreddit (Blank-Cheque) agreed that LPT is an inclusive, respectful and constructive space filled with people sharing pro tips that they found useful with the goal to spread the knowledge and make other's lives better.

The subreddit maintains structure by making use of flairs. Any community post is accompanied by one or more of these flairs which also helps in filtering the post of interest. Although some of the interviewees liked the flairs like Vedant said

> The mods at LPT have enforced the usage of flairs and appropriate post structure
> to still keep it specific enough that it caters to a broad audience

However, interviewee Greentea0108said

> I think r/LifeProTipsis fine as it is but a nice thing to have would be more tags/flair
> for each tip

The moderation strategies to regulate the content in the communities, the moderators on r/LifeProTips serve as the gatekeepers of the subreddit, ensuring that content adheres to the community's guidelines and standards. They play a crucial role in filtering and curating posts to maintain the subreddit's focus on life-improvement tips. This active moderation helps in preserving the quality of the content, making it a reliable source of valuable information for users. Moreover, moderators facilitate community engagement by fostering a respectful and supportive atmosphere. Their enforcement of rules and guidelines encourages constructive discussions and discourages spam, trolling, or off-topic posts. This, in turn, creates a welcoming space for users to participate in meaningful exchanges.

Strict enforcement of the code of conduct resulting in marked user behaviour also helped the community to moderate itself. Active participation by other members, including regulars helps set the tone for LPT and snarky comments, unhelpful discussion is often downvoted by

members moving such content to the bottom. In essence, the community members embody the code of conduct in all their interactions and add another axes to moderation i.e. Community Moderation that works by upvoting useful and constructive comments and downvoting unhelpful, snarky, and sarcastic posts and comments.

This participatory culture encourages the sharing of real-life experiences, making the subreddit a dynamic and relatable resource for learning and self-improvement.

# Ethical Consideration

This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia Institute of Technology. All interviewees in this study are subjects who are older than 18 and have signed a consent form stating their explicit consent. All interviewees were told at the beginning of the interview to drop the interview in case of any discomfort and contact Prof. Amy Bruckman for any other issues. The three interviewers worked at their best to conduct this research in a respectable and an orderly fashion.

# Conclusion

In this paper, we study the popular subreddit r/LifeProTips a 13 year old online community with 22.4 million members. We analyse the community through lens of Amy Jo Kim's design principles of online communities. We also conduct research via participant observation of 30+ hours and semi-structured qualitative interviews of members of the community. Further, we explore research questions with an underlying need to understand what makes r/LifeProTipsa successful online community. To that end, we posit that r/LifeProTipsfunctions as a collaborative knowledge building platform, enables a transfer of knowledge from the online world to the offline world. We find that a good code of conduct and it's rigorous enforcement plays an important role in r/LifeProTips's success.

Our field notes also draw attention to one of the major aspect of the LPT which is community moderation where users use the voting feature to increase the visibility of the deserving posts while decreasing the availability of trolls. This is only possible when all of the community members are in unison to keep the community inclusive, clean and useful for everyone.

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