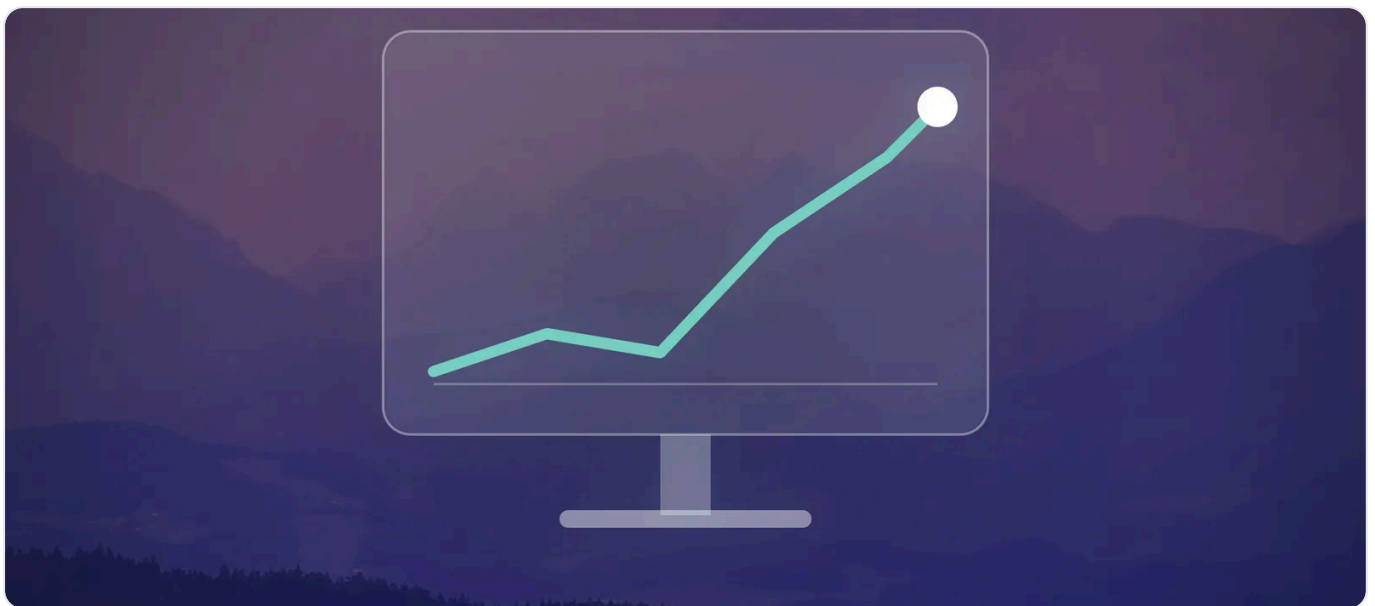


BLOG

Tech Team Demos Demonstrate Demonstrable Value

Inspired by a conversation with Farhan Tharwar, Shopify's VP Eng, we launched an internal tech demo series.

Sensei Labs November 6, 2020



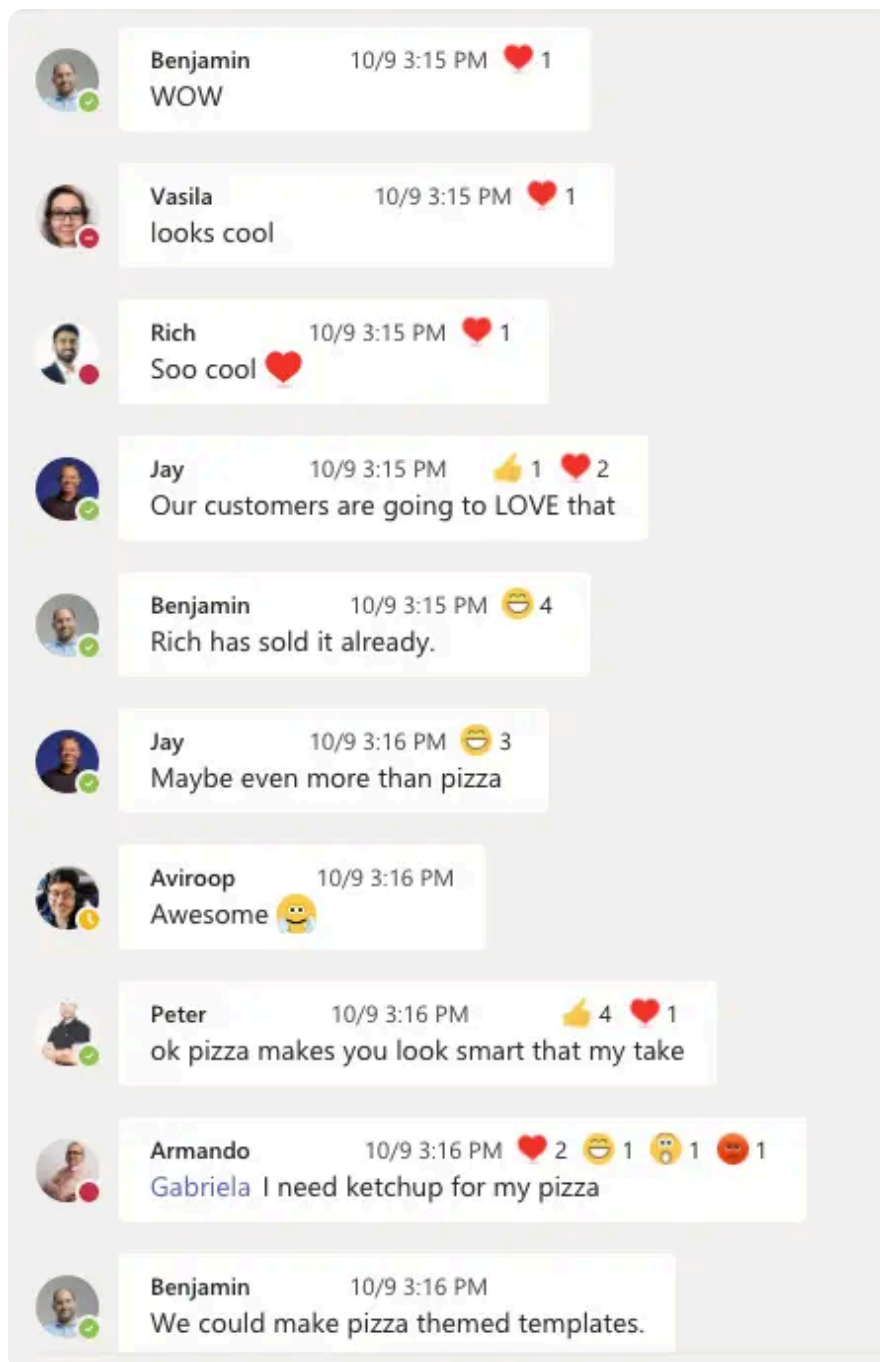
About 18 months ago, our engineering team was having a PR problem. They were doing great work and development on our SaaS application was humming along but people outside of the Engineering team didn't know why. They knew the Engineering team worked hard and could see the application was improving, but it was all a bit of a black box. Moreover, even within the Engineering department, Team A didn't necessarily know what Team B was working on and no one knew what the Cloud Platform team was doing. We were all trapped in our own little silos and not aware of what our co-workers were doing.

A bright idea

Then back in June 2019, a conversation I had with [Farhan Thawar](#), Shopify's VP of Engineering, changed everything. Farhan described a weekly ritual at Shopify whereby each team has three minutes to present the most interesting thing they worked on the previous week. He described recordings of these demos as "must-see TV" for others within his organization.

So, in July of 2019 we launched our own version, a 30-minute team demo, a lightweight, easy to consume, and fun way for the Engineering teams to show off their hard work to the entire organization.

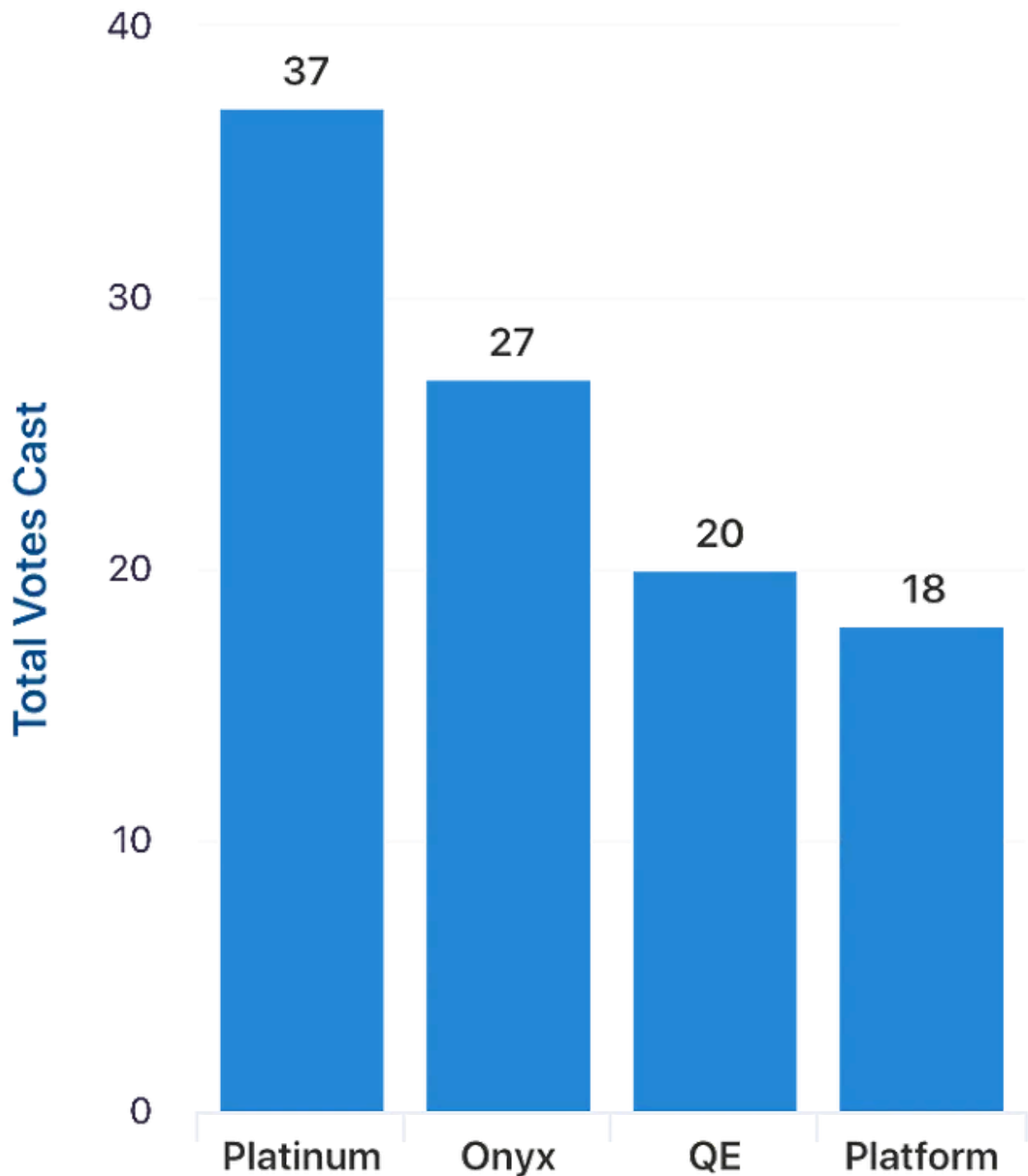
Every second Friday (originally aligned to our sprint end) each team selects a representative and a topic that they've been working on. They then have the organization's undivided attention for four minutes. Everyone else must be muted but while presenting! However, we run a live chat in a dedicated channel alongside the presentations so the rest of the team can comment and share their excitement.



Additional benefits

Through these demos, Engineering shares new features and functionality with Product, Marketing, Customer Experience and the rest of the team and receive feedback on customer impact and interest in newly developed features.

Leader Board



To help improve engagement, at the end of the demos all attendees are encouraged to vote for their favorite. We maintain a leader board and award prizes at the end of each quarter to the Engineering team with the most votes.

How it's going now

After 18 months, engagement remains high. On average, about 70% of the organization tunes in to the live stream every other Friday, with more watching the recordings on their own time. But in some respects, we've become victims of our own success. There's a tendency for the teams to want to impress, so they invest extra time to prepare their presentation, which then goes against our goal of keeping the demos as lightweight as possible. The intent has always been to showcase the work the Engineering teams have done, not to make additional work for the teams.

Final thoughts

As Sensei Labs continues to evolve, including a growing Engineering team, maintaining a solid, scalable foundation of inter-team communication will be crucial. Our bi-weekly, organization-wide demos provide the necessary forum for that and are also a great way to bring the team together and celebrate the team's efforts on a Friday afternoon.

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getconductor.com/resources/tech-team-demos-demonstrate-demonstrable-value



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