Abstract

As DAOs gain more and more widespread interest from both the wider Web3 community and beyond, DAO leadership is faced with the challenge of educating their audiences and converting curious visitors into active community members. As DAOs gain greater attention, the challenge of onboarding increases; individuals wanting to become involved in a DAO enter into this space at various levels of Web3 fluency. Some users have a basic understanding of blockchain technology but zero familiarity with the way in which DAOs are structured, while other users are well-versed and only need to be brought up to speed on the particularities of an individual DAOs mission and governance.

This paper reviews the onboarding practices of four of the leading DAOs: **Prime, Bankless, Index Coop**, and **dYdx**. Beginning with a web search for each DAO, we trace how each DAO funnels newcomers and what strategies they deploy to acclimate new community members. Each DAO is reviewed for its **strengths, weaknesses,** and **unique features**. An accompanying chart will help to illustrate which strategies seem universally adopted, and which DAOs are implementing more singular strategies for community education.

PRIME DAO

Strengths

Prominent Discord Promotion

Prime DAO makes it abundantly clear to any visitors to its primary website (prime.xyz) that the backbone of the community is its Discord server. While Discord communities appear to be universally adopted by DAOs as both training grounds and community hubs for new members, many still hide links to their DAO either in the footer or buried deep in their nav bars (4th dropdown on the 5th nav bar category, etc.) Prime DAO shrewdly places the link to their DAO front and center; directly in their Homepage Banner. Users can either click on 'Get The Full Picture' to view a 1 minute video primer on the DAO's mission, or click on 'come build with us', which links directly to Discord.

Comprehensive Wiki

The Prime community has clearly dedicated time, energy, and resources to their wiki (hosted on Notion.) The first section is simply dedicated to information for a passive reader to become more familiar with Prime DAO. If they then decide they want to become involved, they can proceed to the second section; Getting Started. The wiki does not present the section on *Onboarding for*

Contributors until the second section, titled *Contributor Resources*. This seems wise, as a reader can focus on learning about the mission of the DAO without having to simultaneously adapt to the mechanics of how the DAO Works.
.

1-to-1 Onboarding

Many of the DAOs reviewed in this paper have implemented onboarding systems that include a 1-to-1 call with an onboarding team member. While Prime seems to be in the early stages of testing this and it is not yet as fully developed as it is with other DAOs, it is currently available. User's can select a person to speak with based on their time zone.

DAO Onboarding | Contributors

For whatever reason, the 'DAO onboarding for Contributors', while also hosted on Notion, does not appear to be directly embedded within the greater Prime DAO wiki. This may make it more difficult for people to find, and users are presented with the generic Wiki as well as other resources before they get linked to this onboarding site, despite the fact that this appears to be the true starter pack. (They refer to it as such. Up front it states in a call-out box: Alert: DAOPS sometimes might feel overwhelming. We are here for you.)

Sections listed in the DAO Onboarding Notion Site:
1.) **Who are you?** Tell us a bit about yourself! (Includes a typerform which takes 4 minutes to fill out. They request that you use it to help streamline your onboarding.) However, it also encourages you to say hi and tell about yourself in the #introduce-yourself channel on Discord and provides a link.
2.) **How Does that work?** Links to a separate section which explains cycles, rewards, and how to become an active contributor.
3.) **Where would you like to go?** Provides links to get around and understand the Prime DAO, dapps, squads, and workstreams. Links to a reading list.
4.) **Hey, let's talk!** Prime is testing an onboarding system that includes a 1-1 call with one of the onboarding team members.
5.) You are onboarded. Welcome!
6.) It's time to contribute!

5 and 6 do not include any information or external links. They only exist as headlines.

Substack

The Prime DAO website includes a link to a substack that provides a biweekly primer on Prime DAO; a unique method for educating potential members.

Weaknesses

Forked Onboarding Discord Funnels

While Prime DAO does an excellent job leading people immediately off of their website and onto Discord, navigating Discord begins to pull the user in multiple directions.

Upon Joining Prime DAO's discord, a new user is presented with the 'top things to do':
    1.) Verify
    2.) Welcome
    3.) Onboarding Guide
    4.) Start Here
    5.) Announcements
    6.) Twitter

Verify asks a user to agree to the server rules (no price discussions, read before asking, treat everyone with respect, no spam, etc.) before they are able to proceed to any other channels. This must be agreed to before you are permitted to post as well as before you have access to certain channels. This channel is listed first and is quite straightforward.

The **Welcome** channel greets a user with a welcome message from Primebot, restates the mission of Prime DAO, and instructs the user to click on a 'gate' emoji to start their prime experience. After reading the welcome message and clicking on the Gate Icon, a **Start Here** channel becomes available.

Up until now a user has been on a very linear path. This is where things become more complicated. While The Onboarding Guide appears to be about the Start here channel, it is up to the user to determine which channel makes the most sense. While it appears below the onboarding channel, we elected to start with 'Start here.'

The Start Here channel presents a link titled 'A Manifesto for contributor's guidelines, FAQs, and everything I need to know to get started in Prime. This appears to in essence be a link to the homepage for the **Prime DAO wiki.**

The Start Here channel then asks users to select one or multiple roles that best describe how a user wants to contribute and be involved in Prime DAO by clicking on five potential emojis. Each different role has a dedicated, interest-specific channel within Discord.

- **Visitor:** I'm interested in hanging out in Prime's community but not sure how I would like to contribute yet.
- **Rater:** I'm interested in joining a network of DeFi researchers and participating in Prime Rating, our decentralized rate-to-earn protocol.
- **DAO contributor:** I'm interested in applying as a contributor to PrimeDAO
- **Prime Launch:** I'm interested in jump-starting my project with Prime's Launchpad or joining discussions about the platform.
- **Support:** I would like to report a bug, technical issue, or have any questions regarding Prime token, Prime Launch, LBP, or anything governance-related

The first-time visitor is presented with three roads simultaneously. Should the user a.) Jump to the Prime DAO wiki and begin reading, b.) jump to their interest-specific channel page, or c.) jump back to the 'onboarding page', where they potentially should have 'started'.

If one elects to now explore the **Onboarding** channel, they will find that this channel provides a general overview about Prime. A user is presented with three buttons. The three options are phrased as questions and are as follows: **What is Prime DAO? What are the Prime DAO products?** And **How can I contribute to Prime DAO?** Each button provides a brief synopsis and includes a link to either videos hosted on Twitter, or to more detailed information on Prime DAOs notion site.

The question: How **can I contribute to Prime DAO?** reroutes users to a notion page titled 'DAO Onboarding | Contributors. This is ultimately the greatest point of confusion for any user. At this point a user will have two browser tabs open as result of navigating the discord: The homepage for the Wiki, and an 'Onboarding Page'- both hosted on Notion.

Prime DAO could benefit from making things far more explicit as to what the best learning path is for different users. Phrases such as 'start here *if*' would give a reader the chance to ask themselves whether or not they are in the proper location.

Bankless

Strengths

Governance Tokens Required

Bankless DAO is the most unique DAO assessed within this report, and as such, is the most difficult to differentiate its strengths and weaknesses. Unlike the other DAO websites, Bankless offers users the ability to connect their wallet directly to the website.

Before any mission statement or boilerplate information is given about Bankless DAO, the website begins by introducing BANK: the native token for Bankless DAO. BANK acts as a tool to coordinate activity and is awarded to community members who participate in the bankless movement.

While placing a governance token front-and-center to any new user makes perfect sense for a DAO, it does increase the difficulty, the learning curve, and a barrier-to-entry for new users. If this is the intention of Bankless, it will certainly help separate the wheat from the chaff.

Rather than spending any time marketing or selling a visitor on Bankless DAO or on BANK, the site simply begins to explain ways to earn DAO. Bankless is either confident that their brand and mission and reputation speak for themselves, or they are lacking early educational materials.

Full membership in the DAO is contingent on holding 35000 BANK. There are several methods of acquiring BANK. The site then mentions Liquidity Pools available on SushiSwap and Uniswap, as well as points users to discord where theft can Get a Guest Pass and begin contributing.

Weaknesses

Eligibility

It's clear that the priority of Bankless DAO is to serve existing, legacy members that have been present from the early stages of the bankless movement, rather than attract and onboard new members. The nav bar of bankless.community contains four main sections: Home, Guilds, Contribute, and BED Index. The Contribute section is the closest the site offers to any onboarding outside of their Discord. Unfortunately, this page only reinforces to a user that they are more than likely late to the game.

The contribute page lists 'Step 1' as follows:

How to join the Bankless DAO at Genesis

If you have a Bankless Badge from 2020 to 2021 you can join the Bankless DAO at genesis. Those who've owned BAPs or given to Bankless Gitcoin grants in the past also have the ability to join at genesis.

Any user who is brand new to Bankless DAO simply encounters new, multiple opportunities for confusion; what is a Bankless Badge? What are BAPS? Gitcoin grants? Or what, for that matter, is precisely meant by 'genesis'? It's unclear if Bankless is using this word for its denotation (i.e. The Beginning of Bankless DAO) or if this is a proper noun for a specific platform or system related to the DAO.

Odds are good that anyone who is not left confused by the contribution guide those least in need of it. If someone received a Bankless Badge in 2020, but still has yet to contribute to the community by 2022, they are unlikely to do so.

Bankless could benefit from creating 2 initial funnels; one for legacy Bankless Supporters, and one for the complete Novice.

Buried Wiki and Mission Statement

The bankess.community homepage is set up like a site for news and announcements. Recent, topical posts (*"Get in on NFTs!*) are given primary real-estate, whereas their wiki, forum, and Discord links are only listed in the footer of the site.

While there is a Mission Page, this is not included as a main section within the Nav; rather, it is only linked to via a medium article announcing Bankless DAO.

An overreliance on Medium Articles to inform and educate users is another strange feature of Bankless. Information that should have prominent and permanent real-estate on their website, such as the DAO's Mission Statement and Getting Started Guide is still provided first and foremost by Medium Articles. While information on Mission, Vision, and Values is available on the Bankless Wiki, users are pointed towards Medium as opposed to these other resources hosted and maintained by the DAO itself.

Bloated Discord

The Bankless DAO Discord server, as with all DAOs, is the core communication and coordination hub for the organization. Bankless is unique amongst DAOs in that joining their discord comes as their 'step 2.' First, users need to claim BANK governance tokens, then they can join discord to meet and share their skills.

A user can however earn a 'guest pass' without holding any bank, simply by completing a captcha and verifying their phone. This verification takes place under a channel titled 'First Quest.' While initially the title of this channel indicated there would be a certain level of gamification to the onboarding process, the 'Next Quest' simply involves signing up via Google Forms for the next New Joiners Session which occurs every two weeks.

If a new user does not want to await the next session - where assumedly one will be able to network and receive a more hand-held onboarding experience - the other option is to simply begin to explore the discord. Unfortunately, the number of separate channels and categories on Bankless DAO is vast and easily twice as large as the next largest DAO discord analyzed in this report. There are over a dozen 'guilds' differentiated by hashtags (#writers, #d2b, #devs). However, clicking on an individual guild just takes a user to a page or articles tagged with that specific hashtag. They do not link to specific onboarding for specific guilds.

Index Coop

Strengths

Beginning at Square One

Other DAOs analyzed within this document presume a certain degree of fluency and familiarity with web3, cryptocurrency, and the DAOs in general. Index Coop generously begins their 'Start Here' Discord channel with true fundamentals by providing a primer on hardware wallets, wallet support and troubleshooting.

Ideal Navigation Bar

The navigation bar at indexcoop.com presents the following categories: **Products, Resources, Community, Token, About**. Upon reviewing all of the DAOs covered within this document, this appears to be the ideal formulation. To borrow a marketing term, each section of this nav bar represents a different stage in the 'buyer's journey'. Whether a visitor is interested in reviewing the mission statement of Index Coop, is ready to join the community, desires access to the token, or is already fully in on the DAO and is simply seeking the resources to become an active contributor - they will feel welcome by this website and will not have to do any digging to find what they are looking for.

Onboarding Gamification

Once a user is on the Index Coop Discord and has completed the ubiquitous first steps of the welcome instructions (agreeing to the code of conduct, introducing oneself) they are redirected to a category towards the bottom of the discord titled 'Onboarding'. This category contains the channels #contributors-start-here and #copper-owl-quest.

This contains the channel #contributors-start-here and #copper-owl-quest. The welcome channel recommends that a new user begin with the copper owl quest and links to both the quest channel and an [accompanying external document](#).
Of all the Onboarding Documentation reviewed, Index Coop's is by far the most reassuring even though it starts up front with the following disclaimer:

We are currently reimagining our Community Onboarding flow as we enter Season 1. Our Community Welcome Calls will recommence very soon. Please feel free to drop in to the Community Nest Tea Time Call which you'll find on our public calendar.

Despite the fact that Index Coop's onboarding process is still a work in progress, their New Joiners Documentation (Titled 'Welcome to Copper Owl Quest) proved to be the most comprehensive while the least overwhelming; not an easy feat. One does not end the document with seven new tabs open, scratching one's head as to which they were supposed to read next.

Much of the ease and digestibility of Index Coop's new joiner's documentation is due to its gamification. Everything is presented in linear steps, and there are achievements that a new user has to complete before they can move onto the next step. The most prominent 'gamified' steps are as follows:

Step 5.) Join 3 Index Coop Calls. In addition to the initial welcome call, new users are required to attend a total of 3 calls specific to the working group(s) a user is interested in.
Step 6.) Review and Comment on One Forum Post.
Step 7.) Sign up to the view from the nest newsletter & follow us on Twitter

Actively commenting within the forum as well as signing up for the discord newsletter and social media are not presented as recommendations, but rather as requirements. This is a unique strategy of Index Coop and one that doubtlessly leads to greater user engagement.

In order to complete the Copper Owl Quest a new user needs to post a link to the forum post that they commented on, as well as a brief description of the three calls they attended.

While this 'quest' may seem more strict and demanding than other onboarding practices, it also has the effect of letting a user feel like they are in fact making steady progress. A user has a sense of where they are in their onboarding journey and how close it is to completion; as opposed to drowning in a sea of information, jumping through multiple tabs, and second guessing whether or not they started in the proper Discord channel if they are already so overwhelmed, confused, and drinking from a firehose.

The gamification of the onboarding process makes Index Coop's onboarding the most effective and the most manageable. In the future we can expect many more DAOs to adopt this strategy.

Singular Onboarding Resource

Index Coop keeps new users' attention focused [on a single document](). This sounds simple and intuitive, however most other DAOs present users with multiple potential starting points which leaves people unsure of their footing.

Regardless of whether or not a visitor to index coop is a seasoned DAO veteran or someone just getting acquainted with how they work, they can rest assured that they are on the proper path to onboarding success.

Weaknesses

Web 2.0 Forums

The **Community** section of the Nav bar has the following three dropdown sections to choose from: *Forum, Twitter,* and *Discord*. If a user has not become familiar with that fact that its customary to begin at a DAO's Discord, they could be forgiven for assuming their should begin with the Forum.

The Forum has the characteristics of old-school, web 2 internet forums. There are multiple categories, however none of them seem particularly dedicated to onboarding: O*ther, Community, Leadership and Governance, Finance, Growth, Business and Development, Product.* There is one link in the introductory paragraph that links to a 'welcome post' however that link does not point to a site that loads. One wonders if these same categories exist within the Index Coop Discord, (upon investigation, most do), and if so, where precisely one should post and dedicate their time and energy. The forum seems to be a redundancy, as well as a distraction from the Discord server, where a user is clearly meant to begin.

dYdX

Strengths

Video Tutorials

A unique feature offered on the [dYdX website]() is its Tutorials page. This page consists of a wide selection of youtube videos of other people utilizing dYdX. The subtitle of this page simply reads "Watch others Use dYdx". While the majority of these videos (hosted on the dYdX YouTube

channel) have to do with utilizing the exchange itself, utilizing tutorial videos presents an excellent onboarding strategy and one not undertaken by any other DAOs under review.

Weaknesses

Foundation VS Trading Co.

Searching for 'dYdX DAO' provides top results for both the dYdX exchange (https://dydx.exchange) as well as the dYdX Foundation (https://dydx.community/dashboard). Assumedly, the foundation is what deals with the actual DAO and DAO governance, however the foundation site does not appear to contain any links to Discord, nor does it contain any obvious onboarding documentation or starting point for new users interested in becoming involved in the DAO. Visiting the exchange site, on the other hand, does present joining the discord as the third option, after *Visit Exchange* and *Use The API.*

Non-existent Onboarding Channels or Materials

While dYdX seems in many ways to be more established than other DAOs in that it runs an active exchange, it appears to be the least developed in terms of onboarding strategy and materials and making the DAO accessible to new contributors. It is not an exaggeration to say that dYdX provides zero resources specific to new users or individuals attempting to become acquainted with the DAO.

Upon jumping to the Discord, one begins in the #welcome-guide channel nested within the *Start Here* category. However, upon completing the standard formalities (verifying you are human via a Captcha, Agreeing to the Terms and Conditions and Codes of Conduct) one is completely left to their own devices. A 'You are Verified' message appears in the welcome channel, without any advice regarding next steps, where to begin, or links to external resources. Other channels nested under the *Start Here* category include announcements, social, media/press, and dev-blog. Areas that seemed promising to a new user turned out to be dead ends. The 'level up' channel, for example, first indicated a potential gamification onboarding strategy, however the channel merely streams announcements of users gaining levels, as opposed to instructions as to how to go about gaining levels. Official Documentation linked to has more to do with effectively using the dYdX exchange as opposed to effectively participating as a member of the DAO.

DAO Feature Comparison

	Prime	Bankless	Index Coop	dYdX
Personal Welcome	X		X	
Start Here Channel	X	X	X	
Wiki / Notion site	X	X		
Interest/product specific discord channels	X	X	X	X
Requires Governance Tokens to access Discord		X		
Routinely held 'new Joiner' onboarding sessions	X	X	X	
Get Involved Channel	X	X		
Introduction Channel	X		X	
1-to-1 new member onboarding	X		(in development)	
Substrack/Newsletter Primers and Updates	X	X	X	
Forums external to Discord			X	X
Incentives for Contributing		X		
Video Tutorials				X
Certain Discord Channels hidden to new users		X	X	
Gamification/Onboarding Quest		(minimal)	X	
Website connects to crypto wallet		X		X