TOP 10 COMMUNITY Best Practices

10 — Have an Objective

Are you trying to improve brand advocacy? Enhance peer-based education and support, speed up product feedback, or a combination of things? Understand why you need a community, what your audience needs and how you will engage them.

9 — Be Visible

If they can't find it, they won't come. Ensure that your community can be easily accessed from your website's home page and include links on the main support page and main navigation bar.

8 — Attract

Use your other social accounts such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote content in your community. The more people are talking about your content, the more users you'll attract.

7 — Moderate

Moderators help set the tone, enforce rules and help users; ensuring discussions are focused and productive. Moderators can also help escalate issues to targeted staff who are best equipped to address and resolve.

6 — Guide

No one wants to be part of an overly negative environment. Providing a place where members can post constructive feedback, while also maintaining a positive and productive environment is critical. Setting clear guidelines lets members know what to expect when they violate the guidelines set forth to keep the community a welcoming place for all members.

5 — Engage

Supply users with tools to actively participate in the community--allow users to provide feedback, ensure they have some avenue for off-topic discussions, and deliver support when needed. Have you ever watched a crowd gather on a street corner? There's a natural curiosity to join in and see what's drawing the crowd. Until there are more than a couple people, there's not much draw. Target the number of forums and features to fit the size and activity levels of your community to provide a welcoming environment.

4 — Provide Value

Think about how your community is going to benefit your customers, partners and employees, as well as your organization overall. Survey your members via polls to gauge satisfaction. Ask questions and be prepared to respond and act on suggestions offered by members that align closely with your goals.

3 — Encourage Content

Healthy communities contain many discussions with multiple contributors. While employee contributions are necessary and important, allowing your user and partner members the opportunity to contribute community content before employees weigh in can result in increased trust, engagement and value.

2 — Measure

Measuring the value of your community is crucial in understanding whether or not you're meeting and/or surpassing the expectations of your members as well as your organization's goals. Pull reports on a regular basis to get a clear understanding of where you're excelling and where you may need improvement. Engage team members and management by making reports available within the company on an opt-in basis.

1 — Acknowledge

Those members who are very active, starting and engaging in conversations on a regular basis, are the true heart of your community. Discover ways to acknowledge and reward the contributions of these members who are passionate about your products and/or services and are using their personal time to grow the community with rich content.