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Building an Online Community

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Building an Online Community That's Successful

One of the hottest topics in business during this last year, has been on building an online community, which can be for customers, workers, or B2B. Whether you are involved on the IT side, business, side, or you are simply building virtual communities for teams of workers to share their goals, online communities are quickly becoming a popular way to bring people together, organize them, and even accomplish huge projects in a collaborative manner.

It is important that you learn how to design a community that is effective. In fact, many of us are going to get much better at this over the next few years. Many organizations are beginning to understand that these communities can be about a lot more than just socializing, (although that's a popular reason for building a community) offering an excellent way to get things accomplished.

The open source organizations were some of the first to recognize the value of online communities and have been using huge two-way online communities to aid in the development of complex software. Most of us are aware of these robust products that are the end result, but few of us are aware that much of that development occurs in online communities.

User powered Web 2.0 applications are used commonly throughout our daily activities which has helped to move the online communities forward into mainstream business. In combination with the increase in social networking and you can begin to see a recipe for success. Social media, especially blogs, are doing an excellent job of raising awareness about the power of online communities and how far reaching they have the potential to be especially when used in collaboration with other communities.

Like so many other advances in technologies, these online communities are slowly trickling down in the trenches of the business world in a way that's been understood and finally being properly utilized.

There have been some excellent online communities built with best practices in place. Sadly, there are also many based on worst practices where the only purpose of the community was as a marketing tool to push products or services. Needless to say this type of community fails, because members are looking for far more from the communities they choose to be part of.

If there's just one thing you take away from this article, it is this – people are looking for information, knowledge, and value. If you engage your members, provide them with what they need, and focus your community on what you can for your members, rather than what they can do for you, then you'll be on the road to success.

Basic Rules for Building Your Online Community

When it comes to building your online community, it is important that you are aware of some of the basic rules. This will help you streamline your launch and keep things running smoothly.

You can start by inviting the right people to your online community. Take a little time and do some research and then reach out to cultivate and grow your core group of members. Who are your competitors and what groups do they run? Do they have any leaders that you would like to have on your team? If yes, then ask. Always invite people who have similar interests to what your online community is going to represent, and begin to build your membership early.

Make sure that you have lots of community discussions going on. This is an excellent way to create quality content. Consider sharing the best content across your many forums. That might include cross posting to blogs, your website, etc. Done correctly this can be a powerful tool.

Create an organic growth strategy to build your online community. The bottom up grassroots approach always works best and ensures the best chance at success. The build it and they will come philosophy has proven over and over to be much less effective and much harder to succeed with. Start with your core group of members, gain some ground, and then begin to build from there. It is far better to have a smaller group that's engaged than a bunch of lurkers who do nothing for your group.

Take your lessons from the pros. You really can learn from the pioneer builders of online communities that have enjoyed a great deal of success. Take a little time and examine what they have done, what makes their online community flow and work so well, and what they are not doing.

Remember your online community isn't about the technology but rather it is about the people. You've heard it yourself, people can tell if you are smiling even when they cannot see your face, and it is true. If you commit to managing the online community then choose an area that you love, that is near and dear to your heart, and where people will feel your smile without ever seeing your face.

Finally, don't forget to have fun. That's what it's really all about, and that is what will keep your members coming back, and telling their friends about what a great community they have.

15 Ways to Start Your Online Community

There are an endless number of ways to start your online community. Here are 15 ideas to get you started.

1. Organize a coffee meeting – Invite a 6 to 8 people for coffee. The next time invite 8 to 10, then 10 to 12 and so forth. Eventually begin booking your venue.
2. Email list – Email 6 people who buy your products or who have shown an interest in your products. Introduce them to each other and gradually grow your newsgroup.
3. Develop an authority – Become a highly visible community member by participating, building relationships, and creating content for at least 3 months. Then branch out on your own.
4. Advertise for new members – State that you want to start your own online community and advertise for members. Set a limit and when that has been achieved then stop. Use your website to advertise.
5. Take advantage of Facebook – Use Facebook to launch a group that's controversial. Send people you think that would find it interesting a message. It will spread like wildfire if it is even a little controversy.

6. Contact people who are provoked – If you can find a dozen people who are mad about an issues that's relevant on blogs, forums, etc. Introduce them to each other, and the move them over to your own community.
7. Build niches – If you launch tiny niche communities on LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr, Facebook, Google+, etc. and connect them together under one large community.
8. Add members and then let them know – Setup accounts for members then drop them an email that invites them. Tell them if they do not claim their account within a certain number of days they will lose it.
9. Get a VIP to create your community – If you can convince a well known person to launch your online community while you work in the background, your community will grow quickly.
10. Connect your staff to your customers – Introduce the people who use your products to your key staff. Repeat this process frequently and invite those customers to invite their friends.
11. Automate your system – Have someone write a program that will automatically send out an email to anyone person that mentions your company or your products on Twitter and invite them to join your online community.
12. Ask questions – Ask the tough questions on sites like LinkedIn relating to your industry and then go through the answers, and invite those who provided the best ones to join your online community.

The Pre-Launch Strategy for Your Online Business Community

If you want your online business community launch to be a success, you need to have a huge number of people ready to join the day your interface goes live. You are going to need a three month window prior to your launch for the greatest success. Here's a great idea of how that might look.

Month 1 – Lay the foundations for becoming a member of the community

- * Identify key people
- * Identify other online communities that are relevant
- * Launch a blog in your industry
- * Introduce yourself to two bloggers or key influencers every day
- * Keep a spreadsheet of the people you have received permission to record their conversations, speak to, etc. and when you will next contact them.
- * Interview anyone who is considered key to influencing your blog

Month 2 – Build relationships with substance

- * Use resources that already exist to help biggest influencers and don't require anything in return.
- * Start a mailing list for those individuals you feel might want to be involved in making a difference within your industry and then invite them to join.
- * Every day email at least two new people. Make sure the emails are unique and are customized to the person that you are sending them to.
- * Pick the top three most important communities relevant to you and begin to participate in them.

Month 3 – Cement your friendships and get your clients involved

- * Ask people what they want from the community. Incorporate as much of what they are looking for as you can when you design your community.
- * Create an offline event and an online event for your members to participate in. Invite VIP guests to give a speech or do a webcast
- * Every day continue to email at least two new people. Make sure the emails are unique and are customized to the person that you are sending them to.
- * Make sure that you compile your research and use this to make recommendations about what the online community should look like.
- * Time to get your web design team involved in building the interface

Launch Date

Your launch date has arrived. Now is a good time to invite the most enthusiastic contact you have so that they can test the community. Ask them to each invite at least one friend to try out the interface. Think about incorporating a rewards program for those members that get involved in the community early. Your launch date is here. Enjoy all of your hard work.

Build a Successful Online Community

Setting up a successful online community involves more than just setting up your community. These five key lessons will help you to build a successful online community.

1. Do not create objectives that are restrictive – Do not go into using a social media tool with a preconceived notion of how you should use it. For example, perhaps you use Twitter in a different way than others do. Maybe you send links, share ideas, retweet news, and filter information for your followers. That's what works for your community. If the Twitter team had defined objectives prior to developing Twitter they would have destroyed the potential for a successful online community.
2. Ignore the media – When Twitter was first launched, they completely ignored the media. They didn't pitch a press release to any media outlet. They grew until they were simply too important for media to ignore, and they got more media coverage than they could ever hope for. This works nicely if your community is a niche. Don't bother chasing the media, because it will not be long before they are chasing you.
3. Spam free thinking – Twitter did not spam people to join. The creator's friends joined, and before long their friends joined, and before long more people had joined. There was no spamming strangers to join at any time. You want about 90% of your members to be because they heard about your community through friends and not from you.
4. Keep costs minimal – Keep your costs for building and launching your community to what you can afford. Remember that the cheaper your cost to launch your community the more patient you can be in the need to generate results and ultimately profits.
5. Ask for nothing – If you've used Twitter, which most of you have, you already know that Twitter asks you for nothing. It doesn't ask for money, they don't ask for your personal information in order to join, and they don't make you jump through hoops. They also do nothing

to try to make money directly from you. Take lessons from Twitter. The less you ask of your community the bigger it will grow to be.

These five lessons are a great start to building a successful online community. We've used Twitter as an example of a success story. There are plenty of others. Take advantage of what others before you have discovered, and learn from their mistakes and successes.

Are You Ready to Build a Successful Online Community

Online communities are growing in popularity, and those communities that are built with their members in mind are doing great. They are growing and prospering because their members are getting something from visiting the community. It might be informative, free products, friends, conversation, or a host of other things. You should always keep in mind that the reason for your online community is to build relationships that in turn will help to grow your business.

We all know that we need to reach out to our virtual friends to grow our communities but many of us actually forget to reach out to our real life friends, family, and acquaintances and tell them about the great online community you are building.

Your focus is to bring together people that fit the niche your online community is providing. Bring together experts in your niche along with members who are interested in your niche so that you can educate and learn from what the experts have to say.

Make sure that you take the time to create some type of advantage for your online community. If you already know what that advantage is – use it and make the most of it. Do not feel embarrassed that you are taking advantage of it. If you don't know what that might be take the time to consider what you might use as your advantage. It can be anything – maybe you are really outgoing, maybe you are super smart – whatever it is create that unfair advantage for your online community.

It's easy to build an online community – you can do it quickly and cheaply. However, you should never confuse quickly with having an instant community because it's not so. No matter what your online community is about you will need to take the time to build a solid foundation, grow your membership, and turn it into a success. Post something every day, make it interesting, and ensure you are engaging people on a regular basis so that your members want to come to your online community and they want to keep returning.

It's great that you are thinking ahead and recognizing the value of building an online community. You have some helpful ideas here to get you started and there are plenty of tips and tricks online that can help you if you find yourself stumbling along the way. The most important thing to remember is take the time to build relationships with those that are members of your online community. Only then will you be able to turn them into paying customers.

How to Keep People in the Online Community You Build

You hate the new design of Facebook, but you stay. You hate how Google+ interacts but you stay. Why? What is the reason you stay in the communities that you don't like or that are really bad? Here are a few reasons why, and it is those same reasons when used on a good online community that you are building that can keep your membership growing.

- * Your members data is there – If your members have uploaded pictures, documents, and other information they will likely stay. Make it easy for your members to upload and encourage it. This will leave your members feeling more connected and less likely to leave.

- * Your members' friends are there – People stay because their friends are members of your community. If they can convince their friends to leave then they would leave too. That is hard so people stay even if they aren't completely happy. Encourage your members to build friendships and relationships online, which help so ensure your members stay.

- * Members feel as though they have power – Perhaps your members have special privileges, maybe they run a group, or maybe they are a moderator. Make sure you involve your members and give them responsibilities that make them loyal and far less likely to leave.

- * Members have a mission – Members feel as though they have a mission or purpose within the community and that keeps them coming back. Feeling connected is a great way to keep your members in your community.

- * Your members are known in the community – This isn't so much about friendships. It's more related to recognition. When people recognize your member's name they know what to expect and they are not generally in a hurry to go anywhere.

- * Members contribute a lot – This means they are invested in your community. Whether they participate through posting, helping, or inviting, these members are much less likely to depart from the community.

- * Members have customized their profile – Perhaps they have a custom signature, maybe they have built an avatar, or however else they have customized their profile, they are much more likely to stick around.

Keeping your members as part of your community is important. These are a few of the ways that your members become engaged in the online community and are therefore far less likely to leave the site.

Popular Platforms to Build Your Online Community

If you are thinking about building an online community, good for you, because this is a powerful tool to help you build your business in a positive manner. One of the biggest questions asked is what platform should one build their online community on. And the answer is... well actually there is no one right answer. But what there is are solid platforms that you can rely on, and we are going to look at five of them.

#1 Joomla

Joomla is open source and it is based on PHP. It is one of the most widely used community platforms. It is also a solid content management system. It allows the standard page postings, blogs, discussions, polls, etc. Joomla offers more than 3,700 3rd party plug-ins and that's extensive. It is truly one of the richest online community systems that exist.

#2 Drupal

You may have already heard of Drupal. Many would put Drupal first in the list of platforms to use for building an online community. Drupal is a mature platform and as a result it is very capable and very popular as a community platform. It supports OpenID, workflow subsystems, granular user security, and so much more. Drupal is open source and it is based on PHP. There are thousands of 3rd party plug-ins that you can use.

#3 PHP Nuke

PHP Nuke is actually one of the oldest community platforms out there. It doesn't have all the bells and whistles of other platforms but it is still one of the most used platforms. It is named after the language it uses and it offers hundreds of add ons. Despite it not having any real flare it continues to rapidly grow and expand its market. <http://phpnuke.org/>

#4 Zikula

If you haven't heard of Zikula, it's time you did. This platform used to be called PostNuke. It is a fork of PHP Nuke 5 and it is now called Zikula. It is also one of the most popular community platforms, largely because it is older, well established, and reliable. Zikula is open source and it is based on PHP.

#5 Microsoft Sharepoint

Microsoft Sharepoint is a commercial product and therefore falls into a different category than the others. It is also a very mature, reliable, and popular choice. You cannot use Sharepoint for the creation of collaborative environments their real emphasis is on community style deployments. In fact, they offer a Community Kit just for Sharepoint with web parts, templates, tools, source code, and best practices. This is very helpful if this is your first time creating an online community. Sharepoint has deep enterprise penetration and many businesses choose this commercial venue. However, you need to keep in mind that with Sharepoint technology definitely comes first.

What You Need to Know to Build a Successful Online Community

Anyone can build an online community. However, not everyone is successful at keeping that online community alive and vibrant. We're going to share a few things you need to know to build a successful online community that's around for years to come.

You cannot do this on your own. If what you are doing is talking about yourself and how you have a wonderful business then you will not gain a lot of interest. Remember it's not about you; it's about what you can give to your members to help them. You need to engage your members and keep them interested. The purpose here is to build relationships not brag about yourself and your business, because in all honesty the world doesn't really care.

One of the best things you can do is give credit to others. Share information that others have provided and share interesting things you come across. Why? Because it is not about you it's about providing value to your members, and this is a great way to do just that.

Another thing you might want to try is doing an interview of someone in your industry that's respected and has valuable information to share. It's the perfect way to build your brand. You create content that is highly valued for your members but at the same time you are actually promoting your business and your products. Just make sure the interview is actually of value to your community and that they will take away something from it.

Don't be afraid to promote what others post or have to say. When you do this make sure that you take the time to tell the person that you have done this. Now of course, there's a cutoff. You don't want to become annoying emailing them tons of time or posting constantly to Twitter. But just a quick note that says you have included them on a post in your community and may do so again is great. Do not ask them to put it on Facebook, Twitter, or anywhere else. Just give them a thank you for the information they made available. Trust me; they will reward you with sharing that post without asking. It's an excellent way to grow your online community into a solid place that members want to stay at and new members want to visit.

We are currently in the middle of an amazing time when it comes to business and promoting communities. Many people are still not getting the value in these online communities, and it is those businesses which are going to falter over time. So why wait another day? Why not begin to build your successful online community today?

Tips for Community Building Online for Startup Businesses

Building an online community focusing on your business startup is one of the cheapest ways to get the word out about your business and to generate momentum around your products or services. A community is far more than just a one-time marketing campaign. Your online community is designed to support you throughout your company's life cycle, just as long as you are dedicating the necessary time to grow your online community the right way. Here are 4 excellent tips to get you going in the right direction.

#1 Know Where You Are Going

Look before you leap – take time to take stock of who is already discussing your industry or products. What conversations are already happening? Find those users who are excited about the products or services you have to offer. If you find them already talking on Facebook then that's a good place to start. If you find them already talking on Twitter then that's where you should start. Don't spread yourself too thin when you start. Focus on one or two communities to begin to grow your community, and then you can expand out later.

#2 Know Who Your Users Are

Learn who your user is. Find out who is making the posts about your company, about relevant topics, or even about your competition. Follow those people who are starting relevant conversations and engage with them, whether it's on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media sites. One of the biggest mistakes that companies make during startup is rushing to build their community as quickly as possible and as big as possible. It's a good idea to slow down, and get to know and understand your users over time.

#3 Leverage all the Connections You Can

Your own friends and connections are a great resource to utilize when you first start your community. Ask them to participate in your community and to assist you in growing it. Don't forget about all those email lists you have. They are an excellent resource too. Building partnerships with your existing friends is an excellent start point.

#4 Build the Social Component Into Your Product

If you want others to share then make it so simple they can't resist. When they signup, make your newsletter as easy as a checkbox. If you want them to like your Facebook page or follow you on Twitter make it so simple they can't resist. Make sharing it with their friends a breeze and watch your community grow. If you take the time to ask them to share or follow they will.

Top Platforms to Choose From

You are thinking of building your online community – good for you! But you are going to need to choose a platform for your community. Let's look at 5 top platforms you can choose from.

#1 Lithium Platform

This innovative, fast growing solution is a SaaS community platform that's in high demand. One of Lithium's biggest advantages is the huge support around the community managers and developers that it offers. However, it doesn't have an open source ecosystem, which limits the number of plug-ins and extensions that are available.

#2 .NET Platform

DotNetNuke is one of the .NET community platforms that is in high demand. It has an extensive number of third party modules which will enable you to develop modules that are for sale. This allows for high quality offerings.

#3 Community Server

This is one of the .NET blog platforms that has evolved over time into a full-blown community product. Community Server focuses on the enterprise and it is used on a large scale. For example, did you know that it is used for MySpace customer forums that serve more than 70 million users.

#4 KickApps

This is a new up and coming community platform that is widely distributed and its popularity has grown rapidly. KickApps is SaaS based with tons of widgets so that you can get the most out of your integration. It is highly flexible.

#5 ClearSpace

The ClearSpace community is provided by Jive Software. Recently it has been getting a great deal of attention. It has many strengths that can benefit your community, and it is very customizable.

Building an online community is going to take time and planning. You are going to need to decide on the platform that you want to use right off the start. Then once you make that decision you can begin to focus on building your community. Remember each of the platforms has their strong and weak areas so do your homework.

Your online community is an excellent way to build relationships and grow your customer base. Use your community to provide knowledge and keep your members engaged. If your online community has something to offer your members they will stick around and they will also promote your community to their friends and acquaintances.

If you want to get an edge on your competitions, start working on your online community today.

Community Building Just the Basics

If you are planning to build your own online community you will want to have an idea how to proceed. Let's have a look at some of the basics to get you started. Knowing the rules makes it much easier.

Opt to Moderate not Facilitate

You will discover that managing your online community is more of an art than a science. When you facilitate you can work through other members rather than just announcing what will be or trying to control things. Use of this strategy will help you to foster a group that is self sustaining where members help members, rather than waiting for the group leader to respond. This is a much better energy within your community because everyone feels like what they have to say is important, and things actually get done faster.

Establish the Ground Rules Right Away

The sooner you establish the ground rules the better. You need to decide how your group will be moderated, what format you want members to use, will cross posting be allowed, and what will the overall rules be. It's a good idea to post the rules once you know what they are.

Respond to Issues

Nothing will frustrate your members faster than your inaction. If an issue occurs it is important that you respond. If a member posts a question and you do not answer it or you don't ask other members for their input, you will either lose that member or they will look outside the group for answers. If you find that there are too many off topic conversations occurring, all you need to do is send out a reminder about posting views.

You Need to set the Tone and Find Your Voice Early

In the beginning members will take their lead from you, the leader. It's critical to define what the culture will be for your online community. Make sure your members understand the rules and what is expected of them. It is important that you create a community voice.

How you start out with your online community will set the tone for your community into the future, so make sure you give this the thought and attention it deserves. Only you can decide what type of community it is you want to build and then make sure that your members know what that is so that they can follow your lead. Together you can make your online community a real success.

The Membership Life Cycle for Online Communities

Most of us are inadequate as community facilitators, but in the future you can expect this to actually be a new workplace ability vital in the workplace. Those that are able to engage reach out, and get members to participate within an online community will have the advantage.

Community is very important in terms of success. Understanding the membership life cycle for online communities is a good place to start when building your online community. Let's have a look at it.

It begins with your network and discovery of your online community by visitors. If you have something interesting and engaging that visitor becomes a member. Over time that member becomes experienced and more knowledgeable and ascends to be a leader within the community. As time passes (perhaps years) change occurs and that leader becomes an elder and actually retires, eventually departing the online community. For every member that is departing a new member should be discovering the community. IF you have built your community right they'll be joining as a member.

Which leads us to designing an online community that's effective is important. The size and type of your community will depend on the purpose of the community. Your focus may be a long-term community that's purpose is to serve millions over decades, or perhaps your focus it to build a small community that shares a common niche interest.

Start by doing your homework so that you understand how your community should function. You need to establish goals that are clear and concise, and assign the appropriate talented individuals to build your community. Regardless of the size or purpose of the community, you will need a platform to build your community on.

Many make the mistake of choosing their platform before they know what it is they want from their community, and that in turn lands up shaping their community. The community design becomes controlled by the platform. Rather know what you need then find the platform that meets those needs.

Of course, many organizations already have a preference to a particular platform that they may have used previously, but still try to think outside what your comfort zone to ensure you choose the best platform to build your online community. There is certainly no shortage of platforms to choose from.

Your membership cycle can flow smoothly when you build a strong community from the beginning. And remember, to keep members in your community they must be getting something from it. Don't spend your time talking about yourself or your business because you will find your members resigning long before they complete the cycle.

Do You Know How to Build an Online Business Community

When you build yourself a vibrant and active community it will help you to engage your existing users and attract new users. In the early stages getting a share or having someone retweet will be a really victory, but if you do it right, after awhile, it will come naturally and you will experience exponential growth.

You should always think beyond just the number of followers you have and focus more on building quality followers that will engage and share the content that you post. According to a Nielsen study in 2009, 33 percent of consumers trust online ad while 90 percent trust the recommendations of their peers. That's an incredible difference. Therefore, your focus needs to be on turning your followers into a group of advocates who help spread the news about what your business is about and what it has to offer. This is something you could never do on your own.

Remember, it takes time to build your community. It's not going to happen overnight. You are going to have ebbs and flows. You will even have phases where things are awkward and conversations aren't feeling natural or where people are not engaging on their own. Don't worry, this will eventually work itself out. As you grow your community this will improve. Do not get frustrated and give up when your account doesn't go viral right away, because unless you are Proctor & Gamble or Justin Bieber it's not likely that's going to happen.

Just because people are following you do not mean you have built a community. While it is nice that you personally engage your users, you cannot continue to do that as you grow, which is why it is so important that you connect with others and they in turn connect with others, and on it goes.

Having a smaller community is a good way to start because it gives you the ability to implement new things, and try them, without being scared that you are making a large group of people mad or without fear of failing. Don't be afraid to try new things. Just rein in those ideas that are too far out there.

Make sure that your personality is showing through. If you are boring you will not be able to build a distinct voice and stand out among the crowd. Finally, make sure you are tracking everything you are doing and how it is affecting your company's goals. Take note which of your efforts are getting you the best results and try to do more of those. Building an online community is key to today's business success.

Basic Laws to Building a Successful Online Community

1. Assign a manager to your community – There must always be someone whose job it is to worry about the community morning – noon – and night.
2. Do not use admin powers to intervene unless absolutely necessary – The best community managers seldom use their admin powers. You should not be removing posts unless absolutely necessary. Every post you pull down actually admits failure. You either didn't command authority, didn't create the right environment, or let the wrong members in.

3. Make sure your community has a purpose for existing – Creating a community just to create one, will not make it successful. Make sure that your community is focused and serves a purpose to the people in your community.
4. Share power and control with your members – You need to let go and hand over power and control to your members to run different sections of your online community. In turn, they will keep recruiting people and the level of activity will increase.
5. Use the platform your members are familiar with – Don't gravitate towards a platform or tool just because it is the newest and shiniest. For example if your members use Facebook, don't create a MySpace platform.
6. Create content about the community – Communities are about the people that make up those communities so make sure that you write about those members as much as you write about the company.
7. You need to encourage your members to recruit their friends – Referrals are the best way to grow your online business, so make sure you are using tactics to get your members to promote you to their friends.
8. Build a personal relationship with each of your top members – If you want real authority the people in your community must like you and respect you. Build good solid two-way relationships with the top community memberships.
9. You need to recognize contributions by individual members – People love to be recognized and this is something you can offer for free, which will encourage more contributions to the community.
10. Let those heated debates occur – Good debates are essential to the community's success so let them happen. In fact, encourage them.

Your online business community can enjoy great success when you know how to turn it into a success story. Now that you know just how to do that, what are you waiting for?

How to Make Your Online Community Launch Day a Success

If you are about to launch your online community you are likely worried that it will be a bust. No one wants a launch day that's dead. But then again we don't want the day after to go flat either.

1. Start with a soft launch first. This way the fans that are most dedicated get to warm up the community prior to external promotion.
2. Never launch on a holiday, weekend, or Friday. You are likely to have far less people participate and your community will appear very inactive and dry. As a result many members might not return.
3. Make your launch about one key issue and make sure that it has recently been posted, or if you are aware your community has something big coming up launch then. The same applies if

there is a big event occurring in your industry. Promote it heavily. Let everyone know that your company is participating.

4. Prior to the launch make sure that you get people involved. The more people involved in your community prior to your launch the better. Ask your members for ideas. Make sure that you release regular updates on what's going on with the community and start to build momentum for the upcoming launch.

5. Offer different rewards for members that join on different days. For example, those individuals who join your community during week number one get special, rewards. People that join on Thursday could be invited to a conference for free. People that join on Saturday might get a free copy of a new book that's relevant. One perk to doing this is that people can decide what day to join based on what the offer is they like best.

6. Ask the first group of members how they would like to see the launch go. You should also ask customers and other interested parties how they would like to launch. Let the early members design promotional strategies for the community's launch day and if they are successful, don't forget to reward them.

7. First, develop a Facebook group you can build up while the community site interface is in development and then on launching you can move when it's launched. Make sure members understand what the migration is about.

8. Hold your elections for the main roles early. Ask people to come forward if they are interested in any of the roles and then let members nominate who they want.

9. Launch a one week task that every member can achieve in that time period. Keep updates of the progress.

10. After the first month close membership and then every couple of weeks open it. Increase interest by setting specific times when members can join such as between 1 and 2 pm. Or you can limit the number of members at one time. For example, only 50 members and then we shut down until the following week.

Secrets to Building a Successful Online Community

So you've decided to delve into building an online community – good for you. It's great that you have the foresight to recognize just how important this undertaking is and how it will benefit your business. However, not every online community that is built becomes successful, simply because many don't understand some of the basics to creating that success. So we thought we'd get you started with these four great secrets.

#1 It's not About You or Your Business

The first thing you need to remember is that it is not about you or your business. If you take that approach you will lose members faster than you can type bye. What you need to be doing is building relationships with your members and doing this is going to help you to create and grow

a sustainable community. You do this by giving to your members' value, knowledge, help, and even sometimes free stuff.

#2 Include Guest Videos, Posts, and Articles

Don't make the mistake of thinking that you need to keep your community tight and closed. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, spread the word. If you find something interesting that you think your community will enjoy, don't be afraid to share it. Being a good moderator means you need to look outside your community to find other information that supports what your community represents. Videos are a great way to share information and keep your members interested and engaged.

#3 Don't Forget About the Importance of PR

Make sure that you or someone who represents your community is available to other media sources if asked. This is an excellent way to bring new members to your community. The more content you provide to your community the more likely that is to be shared with other communities and through promotion. For you that translates to new members and growth within your community. So don't be afraid to reach out to others. Always present yourself as the expert in your industry. The media will flock to experts in industries because they are respected and have news to share.

#4 Build Offline Connections

One of the most important things you can do is build offline connections too. We are really good at doing the virtual handshake and making new friends and contacts through virtual space, but in return we have begun to ignore connections in real life. Do not do that. These are people that are potential members of your community.

There you have it – four secrets to building a successful online community. What an exciting opportunity awaits you.

Key Points When Building Your Online Community

If you are thinking about building your online community, you are likely wondering what it is you need to know to be a success. You need to realize that the difference between an audience and a community is immense. An audience is non interactive and one-way, passively watching or reading without participating, whereas a community is two way, with people interacting and engaging each other. It is social. People watch and read, but they also participate and interact with each other.

Key #1 Be Consistent with Your Content

You probably have already heard it – It all begins with great content. Make sure that the content is about the community and not you. Your content should be inspirational, educational, funny, and entertaining. Make it your own. There is tons of content online so you need to figure out a way to make yours different, more desirable, and more interesting. You might have a niche topic, a unique opportunity, or even a video that others don't have.

Make sure you stay consistent and post often to your community site. If you aren't there for a week then you are there every day then you are gone for a month, you are going to lose your followers. Interact with your members and make sure that they feel like your online community is worth visiting.

Key #2 Design Your Community to Share

If you want to know what gets shared the most online, the answer is that which is easiest to spread around. If you put up good content your members in your community will spread it and share it. Good content that has something to offer will be spread like wildfire through all the social media sources that are available but specifically Facebook and Twitter. That means it is important that you add the right plugins so that all your reader has to do is click to make things happen. People like things that are simple to do and carry out.

Building your own online community is an exciting venture and it can be extremely successful if you just take a little time to make sure you take the necessary steps to build your community from the ground up so that it has the strength you need to flourish and grow into a blossoming community where people want to come and be a member.