TOPO

Building the Ultimate Online Community in 10 Steps

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Can You Hear Me?

Can You See Me?

TOPO helps marketing and sales design and deliver <u>great buying experiences</u>

The power of online communities

People make over 500 billion impressions on each other about products and services every year

Question
How can a company participate in these conversations in a way that adds value?

Answer
By providing a place where prospects, customers, and the company itself can interact

Online communities can support 20+ business objectives

1. **Lead generation** – Turn community members into qualified leads
2. **Revenue growth** – Generate revenue by creating demand in the community
3. **Inbound marketing** – Create content that attracts new visitors/members
4. **Email marketing** – Build your email database with the community
5. **Customer engagement** – Create a deeper sense of engagement
6. **Event marketing** – Market upcoming events in the community
7. **Sales enablement** – Let the sales organization learn from the community
8. **References and testimonials** – Generate references from members
9. **PR and announcements** – Make major announcements in the community
10. **Social sharing** – Let members share content on Facebook and other social sites
11. **Customer support** – Let members provide customer support to other members
12. **Online events** – Host webinars in the community
13. **Content creation** – Use the community to "crowdsource" content
14. **Executive briefings** – Have executives brief members on key topics
15. **Product ideation** – Collaborate with customers on new product ideas
16. **Product feedback** – Gather product feedback from community members
17. **Product testing** – Have members act as beta users of products
18. **Peer networking** – Let customers, prospects, employees and partners connect
19. **Brand affinity** – Create greater brand affinity via the community
20. **Customer advocacy** – Identify customer advocates to support marketing

The challenge of online communities

Building an online community seems daunting, but a few things have made it a lot easier

Social behavior
Your customers and prospects now expect to engage with you socially (thank you Facebook, Twitter, and Linkedin!).

Community best practices
A set of best practices have emerged around building and managing online communities

Technology platforms
A new breed of SaaS platforms have made it possible to quickly build and launch communities

Ten steps to building a great online community

The roadmap

1. Develop a 90 day plan

2. Build a lean community team

3. Select an easy-to-use technology provider

4. Build the community

5. Recruit your initial members

6. Seed activity in the community

7. Engage your initial members

8. Collect feedback from members

9. Review your results

10. Promote the community to a larger audience

1. Develop a 90 day plan

- Identify the community's business objectives (think marketing and customer service to start)

- Specify the activities that will drive the community in the early days (and the resources required)

- Keep the plan short – no longer than 90 days and no longer than 5 pages
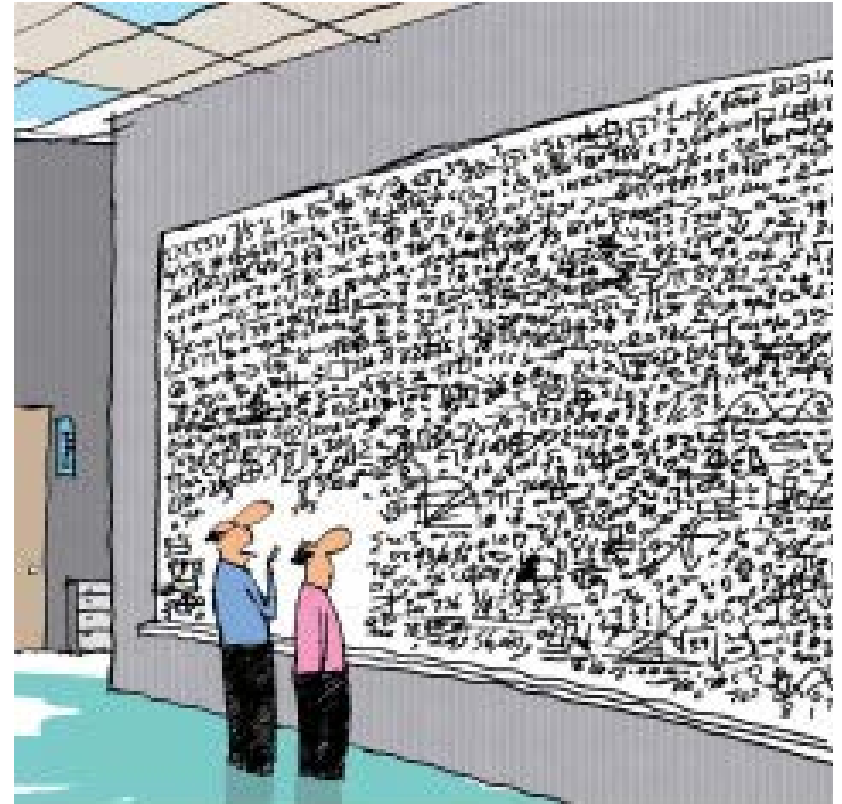
*"...And that, in a nutshell, is my community plan. Any questions?"*

2. Build a lean community team

- When first starting out, build a small, lean team to support the community

- The community will need an executive sponsor, the support of all employees, and a Community Manager

- The success of the community will come down to the Community Manager

3. Select an easy-to-use technology provider

- The technology you choose to power your community will define many of its attributes

- Make sure it provides community members with a great experience

- And that it is easy for your community manager to use as well
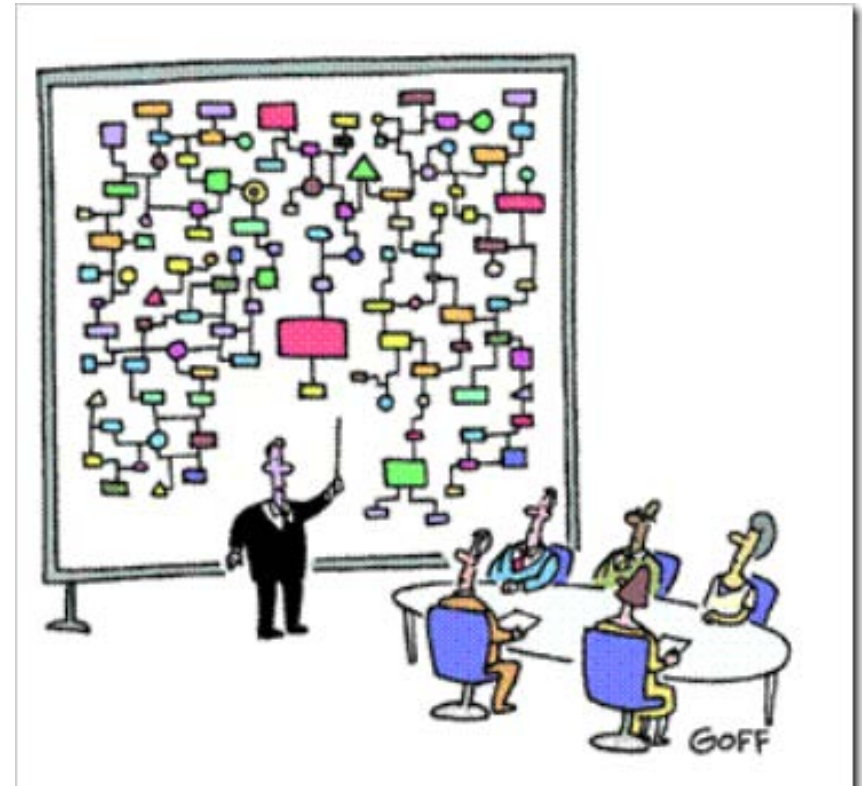
"...And that's why every community needs a technology platform"

4. Build the community

- With a technology selected, you can lay the foundation for the community

- Focus on giving people a reason to join the community and making it really easy

- This requires some design work and great copywriting skills

5. Recruit your initial community members

- You need to recruit initial members who will drive early community activity

- Focus on employees and 20 members outside of your organization

- Invite these initial members using personal emails and the phone

6. Seed activity in the community

- The most successful communities depend on "seeding"

- Seeding involves sharing content, starting discussions, and general participation

- The community manager should focus on seeding activity every day

7. Engage your initial members

- It's also critical that you engage members in a one-to-one fashion

- Use email and even the phone to make people aware of key interactions in the community

- Remember that most people won't remember to come back to the community – you have to remind them

8. Collect feedback from members

- After a few weeks, spend some time collecting feedback from members

- Qualitative data is more valuable than quantitative data early on

- Don't just use email – talk to members via the phone and in person if possible
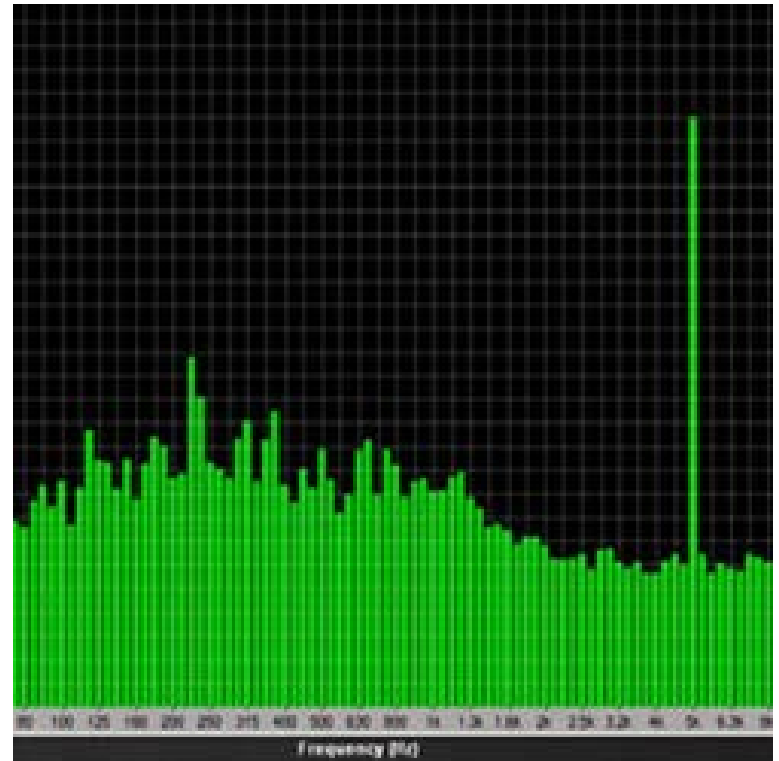
9. Review your results

- After 30, 60, and 90 days, review the results of your efforts

- Focus on whether members are active in the community and whether there is organic (non-seeded) activity or not

- If you like what you see, get ready to launch the community to a larger audience

World's Greatest Community

10. Promote the community

- Now it's time to promote the community beyond the employees and initial members

- Use email and social media in the early days – search will help later

- Your strongest asset here is that there's already an active community in place

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Thank you!

Any questions?

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