



ESTABLISHING, GROWING & MANAGING ONLINE COMMUNITIES

A workbook created by
The Training Collective

VERSION JUNE 2015

INTRODUCTION

This resource is designed to help you consider all the elements of establishing an online community, then giving consideration to how you will grow and manage the online community moving forwards.

By giving careful consideration to your reasons for establishing a group in the first place, and considering how you will grow and manage it, you are increasing your chances of success!

Good luck!

Yvette Adams

FOUNDER OF THE TRAINING COLLECTIVE

ESTABLISHING AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

1. WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

Whatever your current situation, the first thing to consider if you are thinking about establishing an online community is why you are starting an online community. What are you setting out to achieve? Here are some common reasons for starting an online community (and how an online community can be beneficial to achieve these objectives). Tick all of those which apply and provide a comment on how this objective aligns with the plans for your online community.

- Add value:**
- Encourage networking:**
- Foster culture**
- Provide support**
- Share common interests**
- Create a Community Around an Event**
- Get real-time & valuable feedback**
- Other:**

2. WHO WILL YOU SEEK TO JOIN YOUR GROUP

Defining the criteria that helps you determine an ideal group member from a so-so or bad one is a powerful exercise. After all, you can't 'market' your group if you don't have a 'target market'. Not all messages suit all audiences. Buyer Personas are your ideal client profile(s). List specific details about the person who will likely make the decision to join your group. Create a fictional stereotypical profile of this person - complete with name, age, gender, family, title, company role, interests, skills, goals, and attitude -- the more detailed the better. Add as many buyer personas as needed. Add as many criteria or descriptors as makes sense. You should review these profiles on a regular basis to make sure that your actions are directed towards the needs and desires of these personas.

Descriptors	Persona 1	Persona 1
Buyer persona name	Business Brad	Marketer Mary
Age		30-45
Gender		Female
Family information		Married. Two kids.
Role in company		Marketing manager
Hobbies		Reading, Tennis
Job/life frustrations/problems		Sales team is never happy. IT won't help.
Networks to target them	Twitter	Facebook & Instagram

3. What problems will your group solve?

What problems does your audience have? What keeps them up at night? Think about their pain points and then make sure you are clear on this too as you design the group. Answer below:

4. What they will find value in?

You need to consider how you will get people to first join your group and then keep coming back. What content will you share to achieve this?

WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE?

There's not a lot of point establishing an online community if one already exists that is very similar to what you are proposing. So a key thing to do before you start the group is search for similar groups. Request to join them, observe their terms of reference, if any, observe the group dynamics returning at different intervals to see how active they are, who are the key influencers, what sorts of conversations take place. Consider the group's strengths and weaknesses.

List the groups you've found here:

Social Media Site	Group URL	Group name	Number of members	How active is the group?	Strengths	Weaknes ses	Comments
Facebook							
G+							
Linkedin							

SETTING GROUND RULES

The first thing you should do when you have set up an online community is set some ground rules. By clearly stating the purpose of your group, you can motivate your members to interact within the group in a desirable way. However it's always better to start off with what you would like them to post instead of confronting them with a list of behaviours that are prohibited. Social media is after all supposed to be, well, social!

Write out your Online Communities ground rules here:

DEFINING ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Whilst you may be full of enthusiasm about how amazing your new online community is going to be, even with the best of intentions, sometimes your enthusiasm for the community will wane, or the unexpected could happen (you could change jobs, get sick or some other life event could crop up).

For this reason we would always recommend nominating at least two people to manage an online community, so someone can stand in for you if needed and potentially more may be required if you are managing, or expect to be managing a large and very active group.

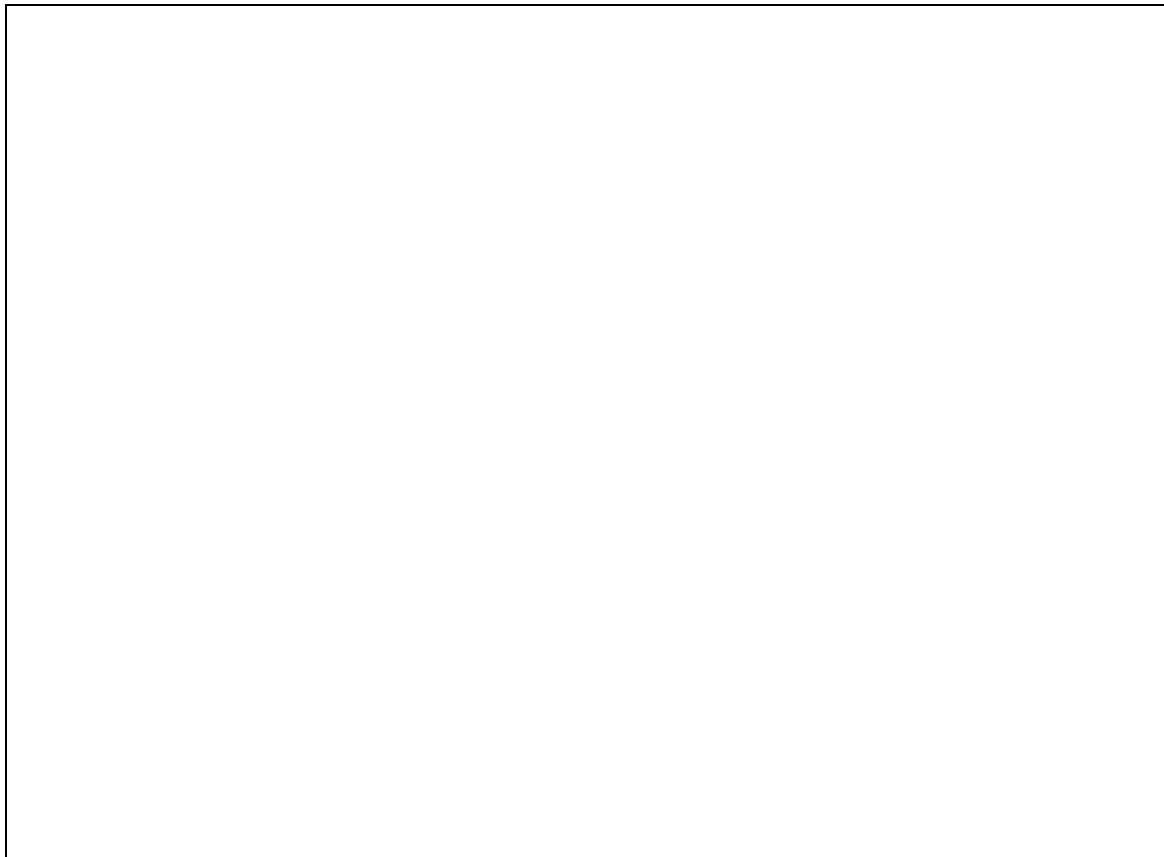
Roles	Who will fill this role?	Their contact details
<p>Community Manager: This role may be one person or several people (probably maximum 3) who have closely aligned values and who are all totally across the group's objectives and purpose. They would be responsible for the overall direction of the community. They would be responsible for content plans, content creation, determining new functionality, and evolving the community. They would normally have permission to edit the group description, tags and settings, add more admins to a group, remove abusive posts and remove or block members. We would always recommend having at least 2 people with the top level of access for security purposes (so if one manager/admin gets hacked, loses their password, someone else still has top level access).</p>		
<p>Community Moderator/s – Depending on the size of the group, you may need to nominate a group moderator / several moderators. The moderator or moderators usually focus on day-to-day responsibilities for the community. Reading the threads, making sure that the right people are answering questions, moving threads when posted in the wrong place, dealing with spammers, and other day-to-day maintenance in the community. They would probably bring any issues to the attention of the community manager.</p>		
<p>Community animator/conversationalist – A fun, unofficial role is that of the community animator/conversationalist. This could be</p>		

<p>someone with no administrative rights, but who may have been identified by the community manager or moderators as someone that is very popular within the group, who is very active, who seems to have an endless supply of great content, who is good at initiating conversations, who is aligned to the communities brand & values, and who potentially makes people laugh (humour is always good).</p>		
--	--	--

MONITORING A GROUPS GROWTH & PERFORMANCE




Now that you have an online community, you should make time to analyse its performance each month and check whether it is achieving its original objectives.

You can do this manually, simply by logging into the groups you are managing and keeping a spreadsheet, and noting things such as the number of members and who are the key influencers in a group, or by using actual software. What software of those you have learned about in our [online modules](#) or programs will you use?



GROUP CALENDAR

Consider a content schedule for your group. For instance some groups do things such as encourage set content on set days for instance 'Throwback Thursdays' where they post old images and get people to have a giggle, reflect, or share their throwback images too. See a full list of days you could use here: <http://www.popsugar.com.au/tech/Hashtags-Instagram-37638899>. What will you do on your group?

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
							
							
							

MONITORING & RESPONSE

If you are the founder or administrator or moderator of a group, you need to monitor it, and endeavor to respond and manage people who engage with it. You should also consider the risks that could be posed from online community and possible responses. Below is a risk management plan we have started, but encourage you to continue working on.

RISK/NEGATIVE FEEDBACK	LIKELIHOOD OF RISK 1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low	ACTION	RESPONSE/S
Posting offensive images		Remove the image. Private Message the person who posted it and give them a warning. Refer back to ground rules.	
Posting of swear words		Remove the post. Private Message the person who posted it and give them a warning. Refer back to ground rules.	

ACTION PLAN

Apart from what you've already written in this document, what other actions do you need to take to successfully establish, grow or manage your online community?

CONTACT US

We hope you have found this resource helpful.

This resource is part of an online module 'Establishing, Growing & Maintaining Online Communities', created by The Training Collective.

It is also part of our 12 week online program, Accelerate. If you would like to gain access to more resources and learning from The Training Collective, check out our website, or get in touch!

Phone: +61 (0)7 545 11315 | Fax: +61 (0)7 3102 9924

PO BOX 5888, Maroochydore, QLD 4558, Australia

learn@thetrainingcollective.com.au

www.thetrainingcollective.com.au