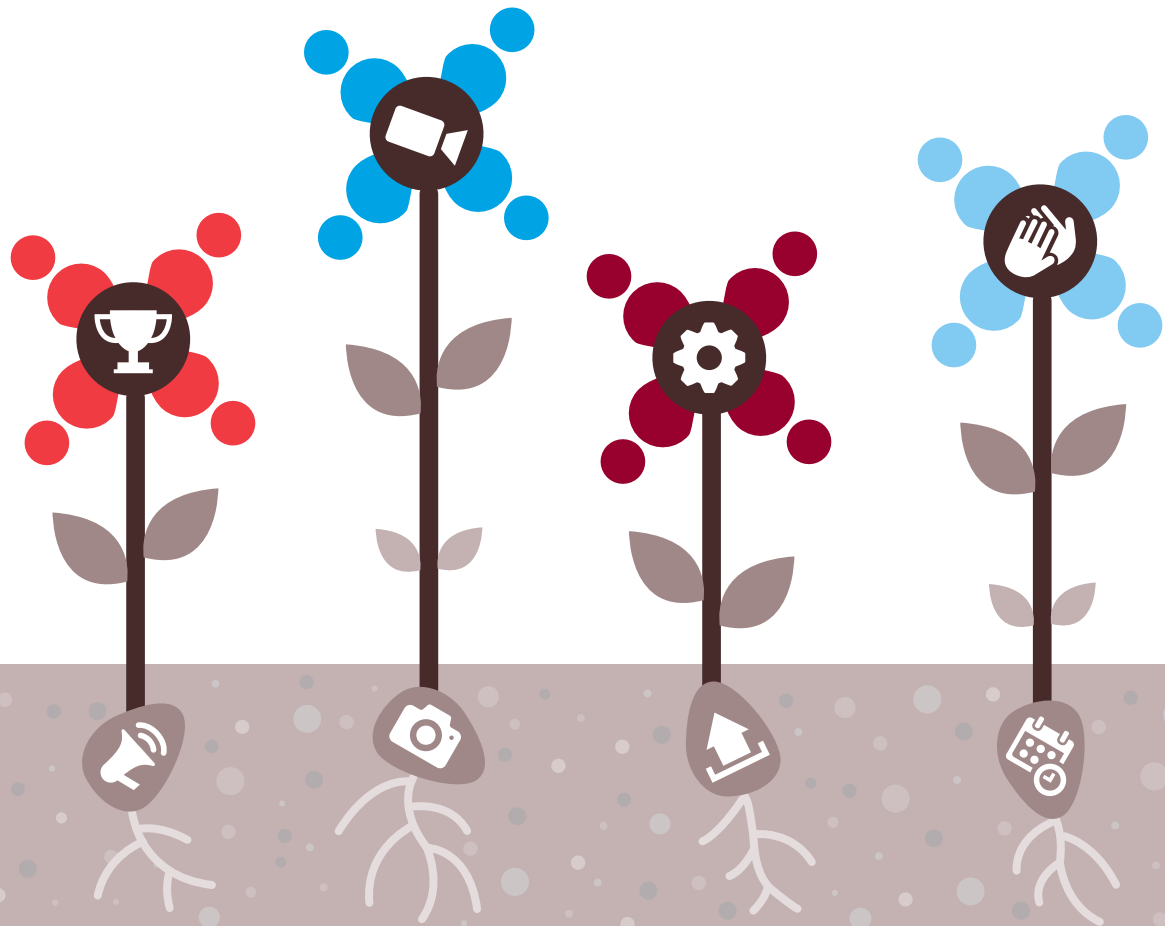


8 WAYS TO SUSTAIN ENGAGEMENT IN YOUR ONLINE COMMUNITY



Introduction

Congratulations: you've launched an online community. You've recruited your first hundred members in record time and activity is humming along. People are posting, liking, up-voting and responding. You couldn't be happier.

But what will your community be like when it has one thousand members? Will the first hundred members be as active then, as

they are now? That's the true challenge with online communities: momentum comes quickly in the early days, but how do you keep it going over the long haul?

Here are eight tips for creating sustained engagement in your online community.



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TIP #1

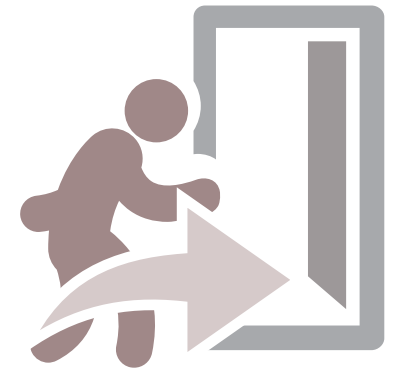
Use Fresh and Relevant Content to Get Members to Return

In sports, there is a saying: “you’re only as good as your last game,” and this is true when it comes to content within online communities. You’re only as good as your last piece of content. Visitors come to your community looking for new content. If your content is stagnant, members may not return. But if your content is always new and recent, community members will come back again and again.

Gaming mechanics can help encourage fresh and relevant content. For example, award reputation points for new posts and new comments (fresh), and award more points for likes and up-votes. In addition, you should map out an editorial calendar of original content that you plan to publish in your community (e.g. blog posts, articles and curated content).



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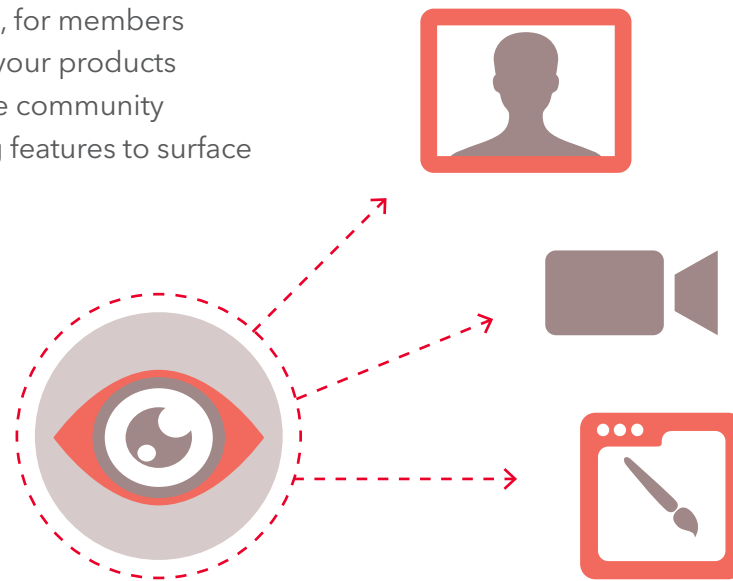
TIP #2

Incorporate Visual Content

We're all visual creatures. We love to see pictures and videos, hence the growth and popularity of Instagram, YouTube, Vine and other visually rich social channels. Research shows that the brain processes images far more quickly than text (one source notes that images are processed 60,000x faster, in fact!)

Find ways to integrate imagery relevant to the theme and content of your community. Encourage members to share visual content. How about a photo contest, for members to share images related to your products or services? Use your online community platform's rating and voting features to surface the most popular photos.

You can also engage members by incorporating their images across your community. When users see themselves, they'll want to share the link to the site! Find the most social users in your community and reward them by featuring them prominently. This may take the form of a "Member of the Month" or a "Most Active Member" designation.



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TIP #3

Encourage the Creation of User-Generated Content

What is a community if users can't interact and share? Give users the ability to post various kinds of content (e.g. blogs, videos, activity feed updates, images, etc.) and put user-generated content front and center.

As users share their updates, community members support and congratulate each other and these interactions form bonds that increase engagement.

Members can develop and enhance their reputations in the community by publishing their own content. Allow your users to create

content on your site and watch your members build relationships, build their reputations and help each other out, all while engagement grows.

Community managers should compliment users' status updates or comment on their posts, and be just as engaged and active as users. Let them know their contributions are valued. This is a goodwill gesture that most members appreciate and respond to.



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TIP #4

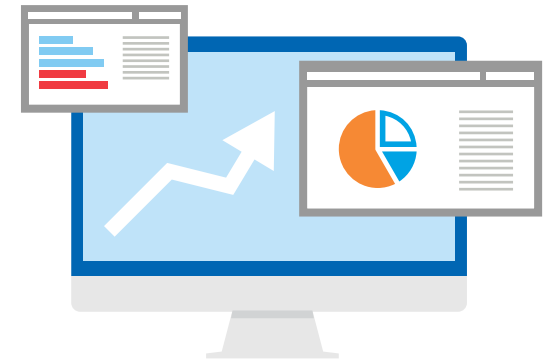
Use Competitions to Drive Registrations and Engagement

Going back to our childhood day of little league games and dance competitions, the desire to compete is natural. Hosting community competitions with prizes can drive registrations and increase engagement during the contest period.

Member activity and site traffic increase as they vote for contestants and try to earn votes themselves. To win, participants in the competition turn into marketers of the community, as they get colleagues and industry connections to register.



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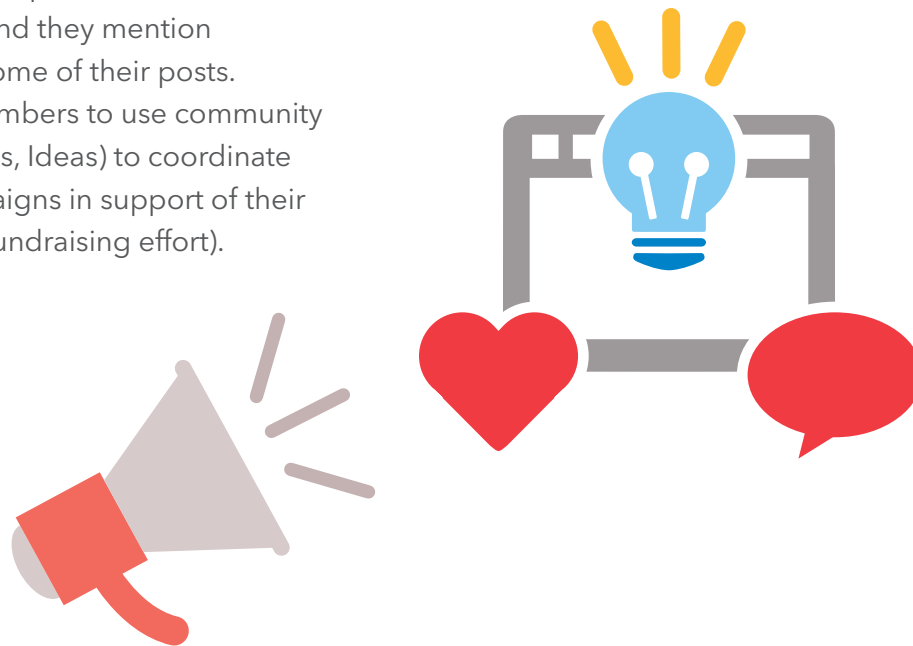
TIP #5

Help Users Promote Their Passion

Promoting your users' passions is an easy way to increase engagement. Many of your users have other interests that align nicely with your community's main activities. When you find this intersection of interests, helping promote their cause will indirectly promote your community.

For instance, suppose a set of members are passionate about a particular non-profit organization, and they mention the organization in some of their posts. Encourage these members to use community tools (e.g. Discussions, Ideas) to coordinate programs and campaigns in support of their cause (e.g. a group fundraising effort).

Promoting your users' passions is a "feel-good," strategic move that will create goodwill which leads to users promoting the community for you. Members gain exposure in the community and in exchange, extend awareness of your community and its reach.



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TIP #6

Share the Same Content at Different Times to Extend Your Reach

While your community may quickly generate interesting and relevant content, this may happen during slow times, and you'll need to remind members that this content exists.

Promote and market your content in various social media channels at different times, and even multiple times. Vary your message to draw attention to interesting content in your community.

Undoubtedly, your members are active in social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) and sharing content there will drive traffic to the community and engagement. Some members simply can't connect during the day and may miss an update while they're offline, so share content in the evening when they're likely to be checking social media.



Promote and market your content in various social media channels at different times, and even multiple times.



TIP #7

Provide Useful Tools and Resources

Everybody loves being able to do something more easily. If you can simplify a process or help members solve a challenge, they will have even more reason return to your site. Provide useful resources right beside community content to increase engagement- help members make decisions, find information, or simplify a process.



TIP #8

Communicate Changes to Your Community

Especially in the early days of your online community, over-communicate. Whether you're bringing a new community manager on board or adding a new feature, let your community know. Then re-promote the changes weeks and even months later, in case anyone missed it.

Communicating change achieves a couple of goals. First and foremost, it demonstrates transparency with members. Community members can trust you'll keep them informed and this makes them feel involved in and knowledgeable about the community. Communicating change also helps reduce user frustration.

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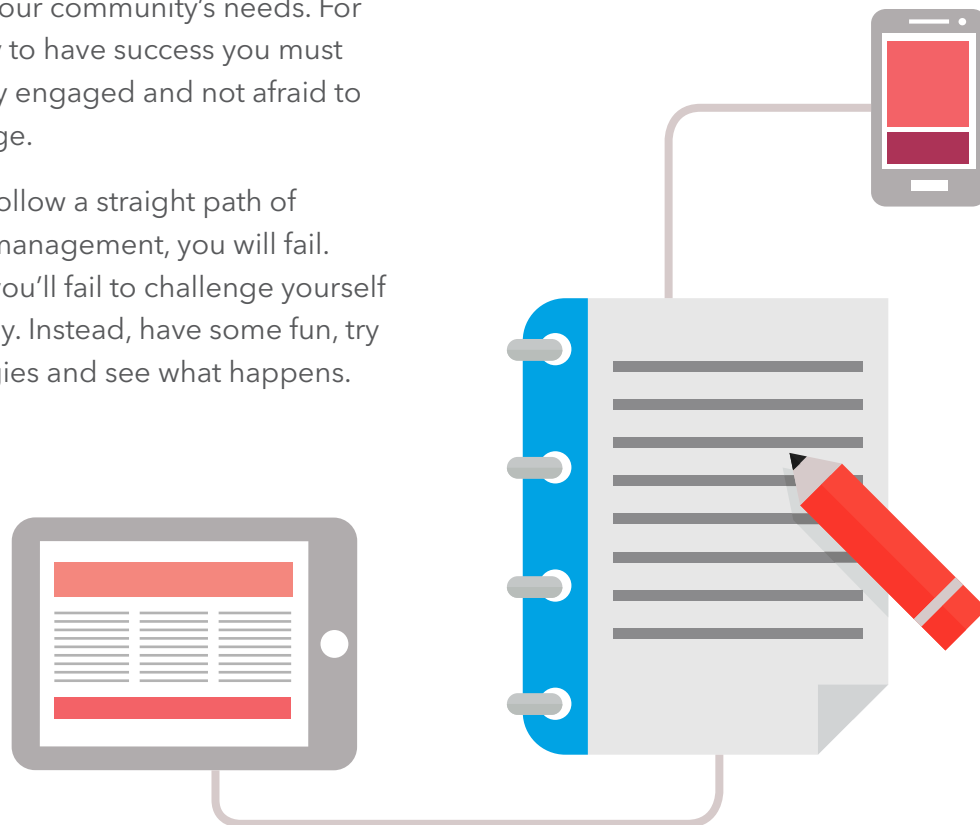
Conclusion

There is no one right way to keep a community engaged over time. It's not easy. Engagement requires constant attention and focus, monitoring, adjusting.

There is no Holy Grail. You have to be attentive, so that you can adapt and respond to your community's needs. For a community to have success you must be constantly engaged and not afraid to initiate change.

If you try to follow a straight path of community management, you will fail. And worse, you'll fail to challenge yourself along the way. Instead, have some fun, try some strategies and see what happens.

Be transparent along the way and you will learn what your community likes and doesn't like. That knowledge is the very thing that you need to be successful as a community manager.



For a community to have success you must be constantly engaged and not afraid to initiate change.



Take the First Step

DNN provides an online community solution called [Evoq Social](#). As a first step, we recommend a consultation with one of our knowledgeable social specialists. They can help map your organization's needs to create an online community strategy.

Contact us today to arrange a consultation:

✉ **Email:** sales@dnnsoftware.com

☎ **Phone:** 650.288.3150

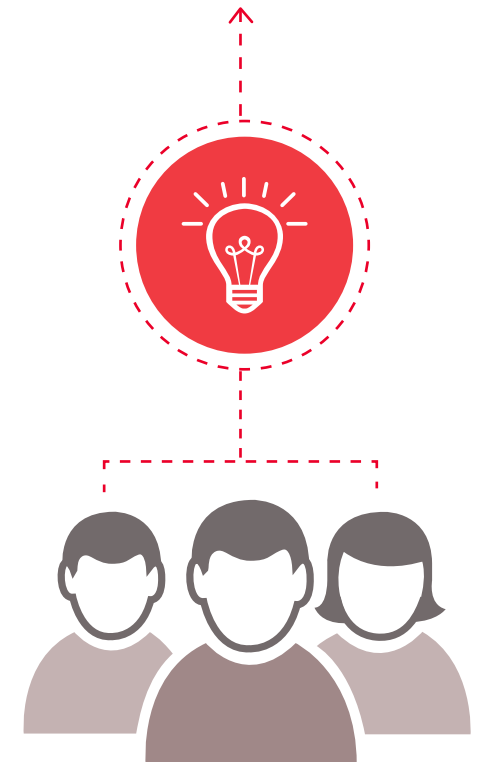
Related Reading

Based on your interest in online communities, we recommend that you check out the following resources:

1. Research Report: [The State of Community Management 2014](#)
2. Blog Series: [Incredibly Valuable Ways Marketers Can Use Branded, Online Communities](#)
3. Blog Series: [How to Create Sustained Engagement in Online Communities](#)
4. Blog Post: [7 Traits to Screen for When Hiring a Community Manager](#)

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About DNN

DNN provides a suite of solutions for creating rich, rewarding online experiences for customers, partners and employees. DNN products and technology are the foundation for 750,000+ websites worldwide. In addition to our commercial CMS and social community solutions, DNN is the steward of the DNN Platform Open Source Project.

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