



E-book

Online Communities **For Startups 101**

A Guide for Startup Founders

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Intro

Without a doubt, the growth of online communities is the most recent and most important trend of the digital revolution.

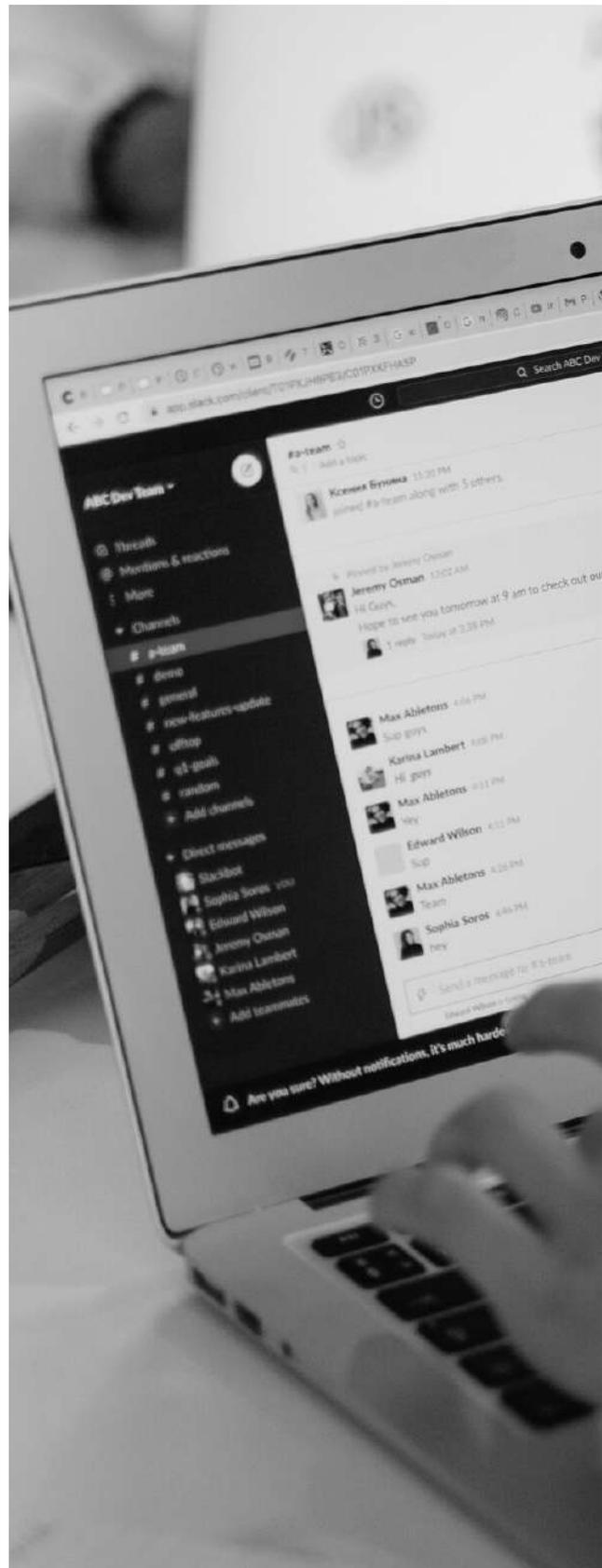
This e-book has the lowdown on all your key product launch questions with advice from our innovation consultants.

As innovation and growth consultants in the startup industry, we have seen several trends over the years. We have also tried out a lot of different ways to grow our business. One of these strategies is to build a successful online community.

Our community, [Growth Marketing Pros](#), has over 9100 members. Product owners, entrepreneurs, and growth marketers use Slack to share growth strategy examples, ideas, and best practices.

Furthermore, we have witnessed a rise in demand for community-building from our clients.

So, based on what we had learned, we wrote an e-book in which each chapter features an expert on the topic answering our clients' and readers' most pressing questions about how and why to build an online community.



Why Build an Online Community for Your Startup?



Chapter 1: Why Build an Online Community for Your Startup?

Featuring Ivan Zografski, The founder of Solveo and GMP

Let's begin with the definition of an online community.

An online community is a structured group of people who use the internet to share mutual interests, values, information, and experiences regarding a specific topic or product. Depending on what they're for and who they're for, these communities can be anything from small discussion forums to large social networks.

By using digital technologies, businesses can give customers a powerful way to connect and interact with their brand, which can lead to long-term relationships and a lot of brand loyalty.

Why is building a community important for startups?

Building a community has lots of benefits. First, it can help the company connect with people who share an interest in their products or are interested in the problem that they're solving. This can lead to a lot of valuable discussions and the sharing of ideas.

Also, one of the best things you can do as a startup is to get feedback from your customers, even before they become customers.

90% of the brands said that they use the community members' suggestions to improve their products and services.

The community is one place where you can facilitate that. Consequently, startups can improve the product even before building it; once they have customer feedback, they can build a better product.

What is the purpose of online communities for startups?

We live in the age of consumers, meaning that customers have a say in how businesses are run and what products are successful. This makes community building more important than ever, especially for startups.

Online communities give startups a great chance to get a high return on investment (ROI) and build long-term relationships with customers.

Some of the benefits are:

- Boosting your brand awareness;
- Innovation and co-creation with real users;
- Inspiring dynamic relationships;
- Creating a higher level of customer support;
- Cultivating brand loyalty;

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A thriving community can help a business in many ways, such as by making its products and services better, increasing its profits, and encouraging new ideas.

To achieve this, consider your community's primary purpose. For example, is it to increase brand awareness? Increase customer loyalty? Increase sales? All of that information will help you create an efficient strategy.

59% of organizations use online communities to provide customer support.

Knowing your main goal can help you decide who you want to reach, what kind of content to give them, and what topics to talk about. It can also help you figure out where your efforts should go.

85% of brand owners say that a branded online community makes people more likely to trust the brand.

What types of online communities are there?

Companies are becoming more aware that their audiences, customers, and clients are their most valuable assets and are using online communities to attract, keep, and reward them.

However, one size does not fit all. There are many options for tailoring an online community to your brand. Here are five significant community types to consider for business growth:

- 1. Knowledge and learning communities;**
- 2. Expert networks and advisory communities;**
- 3. Event communities;**
- 4. Membership communities;**
- 5. Brand communities.**

Different online communities might work for your new business, but make sure to pick the right one for your brand and goals.

The primary goal of most communities is to retain customers.

Let's dive deeper and understand how communities work to help you make a more human-centered decision.

Why do people join online communities?

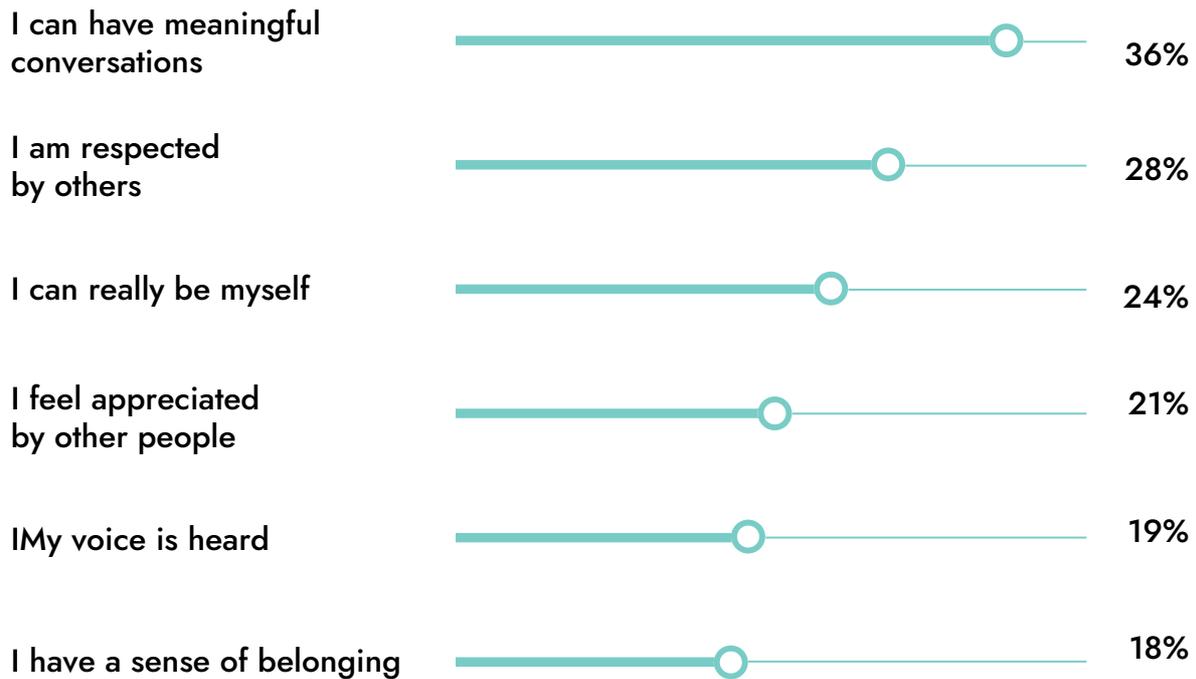
Remember that we are social animals with physical, mental, and emotional needs. Even today, we depend on our tribes to feel safe, meaningful, and included. Yet we also want to follow our interests and goals. Luckily, communities can both encourage individuality and bring people together.

Chapter 1: Why Build an Online Community for Your Startup?

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The [HubSpot Blog's Consumer Trends Report](#) polled over 1000 people to find out why they participate in online communities. The top reasons were for fun, sharing similar interests with others, and keeping connected with their communities.

Other reasons include learning something new, seeking support, being inspired, gaining exclusive access, etc.



Keeping in mind why your target people join communities will help you give them lots of consistent reasons to join and stay.

Remember that no matter what made someone sign up in the first place, they will only keep coming back and participating if the community meets a human need. They want to learn, share, grow, get perks, be entertained, and feel like they have been heard and are important. People will return for more if your community is useful, fun, and enjoyable.

"Most people join communities for personal reasons. And the best way to build great communities is to connect with your audience on a personal level."

*- Ivan Zografski,
the Founder of Solveo*

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At what stage of business should startups build a community?

A strong online community can be a valuable asset at any point along the way. Still, we recommend starting as soon as possible, since building a community takes time.

Having a community before launching can make the first few months of growth easier and help you make a profit immediately.

For example, Basecamp, a cloud-based SaaS startup, had up to 50,000 followers on their blog "Signal vs. Noise" before launching. This built-in community contributed to Basecamp's successful launch. According to Forbes, the startup is now worth roughly \$25 million.

Launching an online community and building a sustainable edge over the competition is never too late.

According to 85% of online businesses, communities have positively impacted their business.

What are the pros and cons of community building as a brand strategy for a startup?

There are many advantages that online communities can bring to a

business—and, of course, some disadvantages as well. Here we list some based on our consultant's experience.

Pros:

- If done right, the ROI is huge;
- Builds credibility;
- The easiest way to convert users to customers is through the community;
- Real-time feedback gathering from your current and potential users.

For 88% of the organizations, online communities helped them achieve their mission. While 64% agreed that it helped them in their decision-making.

Cons:

- It takes specific skills and knowledge to keep a thriving community;
- It takes a lot of time to build it up from zero;
- It requires additional resources to maintain the community.
- It costs money.

41% of the organizations don't have online communities, because of a lack of sufficient funds, staff, or other resources.

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Our client's key worries are the costs of creating and sustaining the online community. So let's now determine how to assess whether this investment is viable.

What's the typical ROI of building a community?

That's a tricky question to answer.

We can all agree that there is a lot of value in online communities, since most of the big companies run them. However, it is not always simple to quantify this value and account for the financial impact communities can have on a business. And this is important for startups.

88% of community professionals agree that the community is a critical part of their business.

Community building requires an investment in human labor, event management, and other potentially costly activities. This is especially true during the first 12 months of the community, when there will be a lot to do, build, and change.

The ROI depends on how you run your community, whether you do it yourself or hire outside community managers.

Still, there are a few community-specific indicators that can be linked directly to community activities, even though the community will definitely help the company reach its goals as a whole.

Monthly Active Users (MAUs) are the most popular metric used to measure online communities. (57%)

Here are a few examples of KPIs to help you track the ROI:

- MAU's is the measure of how many members have returned to the community in the last 30 days;
- Increased customer engagement (KPI = community accounts for 10% of usage or upsells; average NPS from customers in community > customers not in the community);
- Pipeline generation (KPI = 10% of leads, or \$\$ of pipeline generated by community);
- Content contributions (KPI = 25% increase in user-generated content y/y);
- Brand awareness (KPI = # social mentions; # of customer referrals from community);
- Product adoption (KPI = 20% higher among community members vs. non-members).

You can take any core business KPIs and compare your community members' average performance on these metrics vs. non-members.

Conclusion

Building an online community is a long-term process; it takes at least a year to build a strong online community with meaningful interaction. You should test various strategies to raise community involvement.

Our advice on building a community is to find your audience, see where they hang out, and talk to them directly. Then, create something that offers value before inviting them to your community. That's the main thing that many people overlook.

You must build something that offers value before people come to the community because people will come for "the what." So they should have something for free from the beginning, and then once you have an active community, people will stay and become engaged.

From there, it grows naturally through word of mouth, many internal connections, and people recommending the community, which is the point.

How to Build an Online Community for Your Startup

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Chapter 2: How to Build an Online Community for Your Startup?

Featuring Stefan Despotovski, Community Manager at Solveo

Unlike social media, which groups people based on mutual friends, online communities unite people based on their shared passions and interests.

And businesses understand how to take advantage of this.

If you own a company, you know that constantly pressuring customers to buy something does not result in loyalty.

So, when does a customer turn into an evangelist? It is only when they feel like they are a part of your community and your products directly address their problems that they will buy from you. A two-way conversation is a better way to get your message across to a customer than just listing the benefits of your product.

Let's take a look at how to make one.

What do you need to start building an online community?

It is a good idea to have the necessities ready before you begin.

Your options will vary depending on the platform you're using, but here's the general flow of steps you'll need to take when building your online community:

Visual identity. Make sure to update your group description, profile photo, and cover photo, whether you're building your community on social media or your own platform.

If you host your community on your platform, you can customize things like fonts, colors, and key imagery without all of the noise and distractions that social community platforms provide.

Description of the community.

The community description is like your elevator pitch in that it should give a quick overview of what your community is all about.

The description communicates who the community is for and what people can do there, as well as a friendly reminder that it is a positive, encouraging, and accepting community.

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Welcome messages and onboarding materials.

Stepping back into the shoes of your customer, consider the following:

What do they notice first when they join the community?

Do they understand how to use the community? What should I write? Where should I post?

A welcome message or readme at the top of your group will help your new community members succeed.

Another great way to welcome new community members is to tag all of your new members for the week in a post, encouraging everyone to say hello.

Tags, sections, and channels.

Tags and sections help members find exactly what they're looking for. Tag popular topics to help members find the information they need.

To ensure a smooth experience, put yourself in your customer's shoes to ensure there are no speed bumps.

Membership questions.

You might also want to include membership questions that people answer when they apply to join the group.

For example, ask for emails and permission to add you to our mailing list; this has been a great way to build our marketing funnel. If you want to soften your ask for membership, you can offer something like an e-book in exchange for their email address in your membership questions.

Roles and responsibilities.

If you own a startup, you probably don't have an army at your disposal, but here are some things to discuss with your team for the community's future development:

Daily administration: It's common for customer service or a social media manager to manage the community when it's first established.

Webinars: Who will host them if you plan to hold webinars for your community? Who is assisting with audio and video?

Sales: Who will be in charge of responding to pricing and package-related inquiries?

The product: Who will get feedback from the community about the product and respond to requests for new features?

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How do you find your first members?

The first step is to interact with potential customers where they already gather.

Try to be helpful; don't sell or promote anything; simply include information about your project in your bio or profile.

You can collect email addresses without attempting to sign them up for anything. Then, when you have 20–30 people, set up chats with 10–15 of them to find out what they'd find helpful in a community space.

Only then should you consider establishing a community.

Remember that these are only the starting points. Don't stop once you've put these foundational pieces in place.

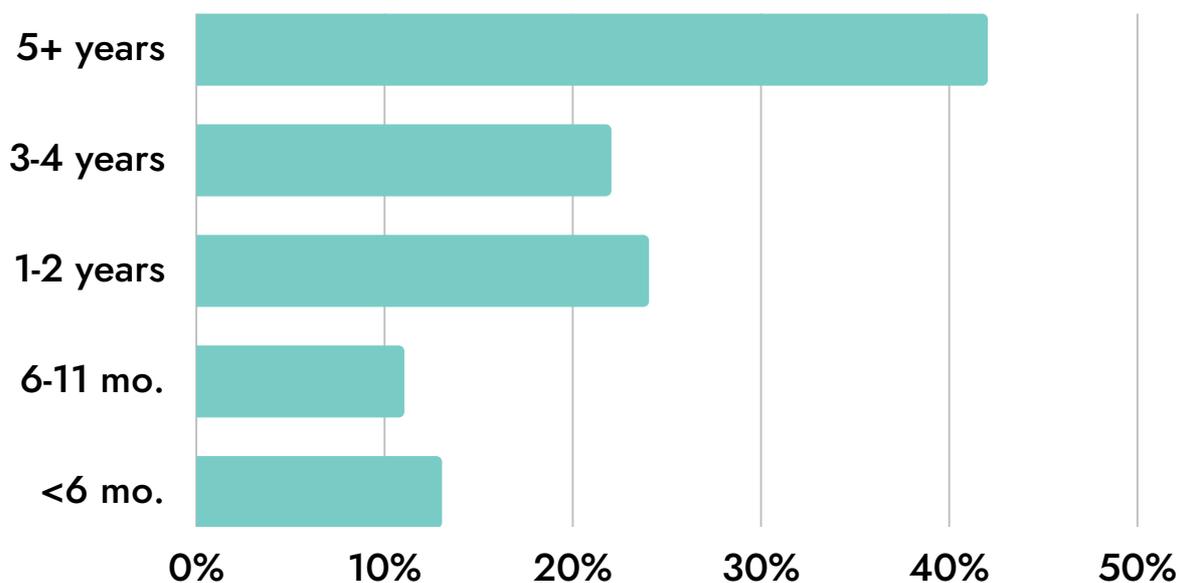
Instead, begin tracking community performance. In the early stages, don't be afraid to pivot toward what works and away from what doesn't.

88% of community professionals agree that the community is a critical part of their business.

How long has your community existed?

42%

communities existed
for over 5+ years



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TIPS FOR STARTING AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

DEFINE YOUR COMMUNITY'S OBJECTIVE

This point cannot be emphasized enough. Your community will only grow if it benefits your startup and its target audience. Common goals for the community are product support, customer success, product feedback and ideation, learning, making connections, and talking about the industry.

MAINTAIN MODERATION

Maintain moderation. Moderation creates a safe environment and ensures that all posts are valuable. Create community guidelines and post them prominently so new members can see them.

MAKE AN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Determine what people in your community will do and how this will push people toward the goal. For example, consider starting conversations, hosting online events, and hosting AMAs.

DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL ATTRACT MEMBERS

Determine what people in your community will do and how this will push people toward the goal. For example, consider starting conversations, hosting online events, and hosting AMAs.

CREATE EVENTS

You can host various events, such as panel discussions, webinars, and weekly office hours. Promote these events in a sidebar and through other channels. This encourages people to return to the community.

CREATE A COMMUNITY SPACE

You can create a community by organizing your content into collections. You can even add it to the website or app of your new business to make it easy for customers to find.

IMPROVE ONBOARDING

You want people to feel a sense of belonging as soon as they join. Onboarding consists of a "start here" space with information for new members and an introduction space with sample questions people can answer to get involved.

ENCOURAGE INTERACTION

You can't expect newcomers to create a sense of community unassisted. As a result, encourage your team to respond to posts and share content.

RECOGNIZE CONTRIBUTORS

Find new ways to thank members for their contributions. For instance, you could give them perks like early access to product updates and ask for their feedback. You can also highlight top contributors by using different badges and a leaderboard.

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"Find the right audience and have a strong goal that you and the community want to reach together."

*- Stefan Despotovski,
Community Manager at Solveo.*

How to grow the membership?

If you're wondering how to grow an online community, remember why you started in the first place. What drew you to the idea of community building? This is your most powerful tool to attract new members.

Here are some general tips on how to grow the online community that might fit you.

Create valuable content.

Quality content will encourage greater engagement and interest among community members. Find out what kinds of content are popular in your community and create topics that will make people want to read, comment, and share more.

To maintain integrity and ownership, highlight relevant and exciting posts and remove inappropriate ones.

Involve influencers.

Influencers in your niche can help your community grow. They can inspire new people to join and pique the interest of people who weren't sure about joining before.

It could be anyone with a strong connection, powerful words, or a solid social presence. So, do not hesitate to reach out to them.

Identify and support your biggest supporters.

Even though everyone in your online community has the same goals or interests, that doesn't mean they will all invest the same amount. Some members will go above and beyond with your content. As your online community grows, you could ask your most active members to help out in a more team-oriented way, like moderating.

Create a unique community culture.

You can grow a unique culture by paying close attention to the language of the community and using it in your communications, as well as by using symbols that the community has made on its own. Reinforce culture by speaking to your users as they talk to one another.

Reward members who recruit friends.

You can keep score and reward the top performers each month. If each new member contributes to your profit, reward the person who brought them on board. Allow members to become extremely popular in their social circles.

Organize competitions.

Competitions are practical, especially when the popular vote determines the winners. This means that participants encourage their friends and colleagues to come and participate

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Make an effort to keep these newcomers involved.

Members should bring something for their friends.

Interview members.

When you interview someone, it's natural for them to ask their friends to read it. So keep these newcomers in the loop by asking them to participate in a poll on a topic that came up during the interview or discuss the interview in the forums at the end.

57% of the community members expect the communities to be reliable. They also expect some personal networking and connectivity with other members.

How to choose the right platform?

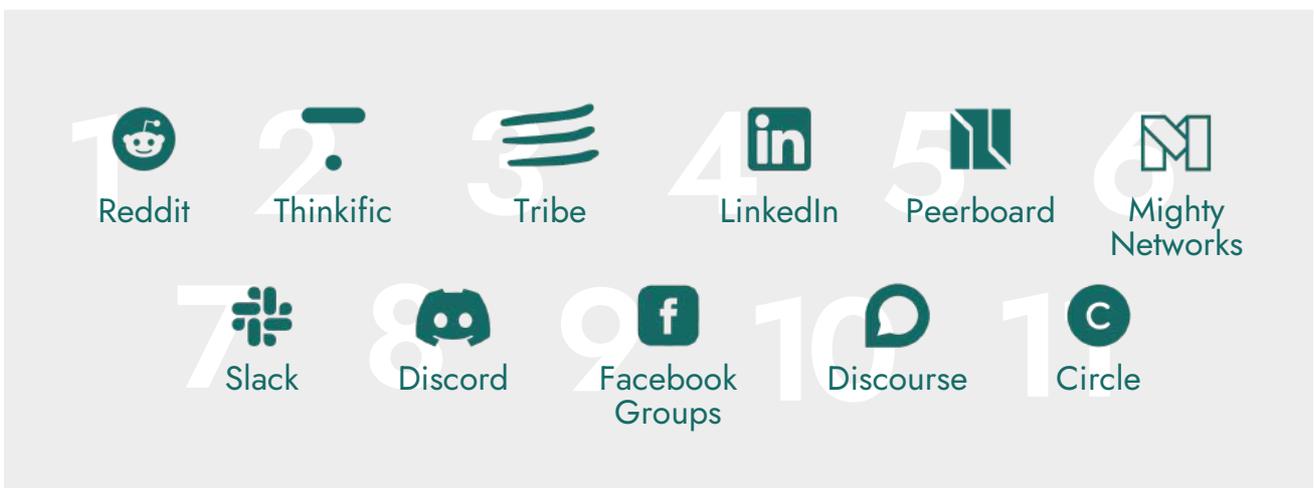
When you think of an online community platform, you might think of Facebook or LinkedIn, but many other platforms could be suitable for your brand.

Facebook (29%) and Slack (23%) are the top platforms used by organizations to host their communities.

To begin, you must understand your target audience and where they are now or will be in the near future. Then, think about which parts of your community are the most important, such as direct messaging, discussions, media, invites, and profiles.

The bottom line is that an online community platform should be a safe and encouraging environment that allows you to create a group in which your members will feel connected and engaged.

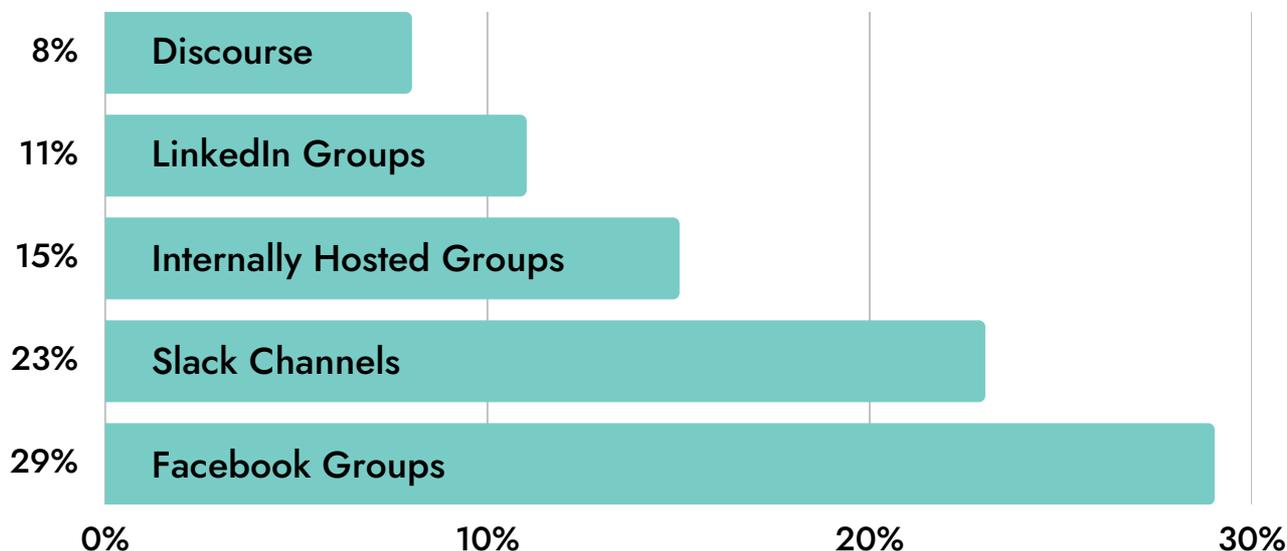
That's why we've already chosen some of the best online community platforms where you can create the best environment for your target audience.



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Top platforms used by organizations to host their communities



Conclusion

Community building is a journey that requires constant iteration. Continue to test and change things as you learn more about what members want.

By matching the needs of your members to the needs of the community, you will continue to strengthen connections, improve the sense of community, and ultimately grow it.

How To Keep an Online Community Thriving?

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Chapter 3: How to keep an online startup community thriving?

Featuring Joana Donkova, Community Manager at GMP

An online community means more than just creating content for people with similar interests. The ability to interact with each other opens another perspective on how we can solve our problems and help others do the same.

The value of a community lies in the variety of people with whom it connects.

Sharing our thoughts and asking for help or support from an unknown group is challenging. Communities get around this by keeping a space that helps people feel like they belong and respect each other. A community that is not properly moderated is condemned. Once you've established the community, your next priority should be ensuring engagement.

Why is community engagement so crucial for keeping an online community alive?

Community engagement is the foundation of a thriving community and the driving force that keeps the community alive and dynamic.

About 55% of online community founders are most frustrated by how hard it is to keep members interested.

You need to create an environment where people feel comfortable talking to each other, giving each other advice based on their own experiences, and asking for help or feedback when they need it.

Additionally, active engagement from community members can lead to the creation of new and diverse content, which can draw in new users and keep the community lively.

When members feel like their contributions and participation are valued and appreciated, they are more likely to stay involved and active in the community.

"Make things simple for your members!

Don't make it too difficult for members to participate, as this may cause them to unfollow your community.

Companies frequently complicate access and participation procedures.

Even though it's tempting to gather information about users for analysis, you shouldn't do this all the time.

Put yourself in the shoes of your members and make their experience as smooth as possible."

*- Joana Donkova,
Community Manager at GMP.*

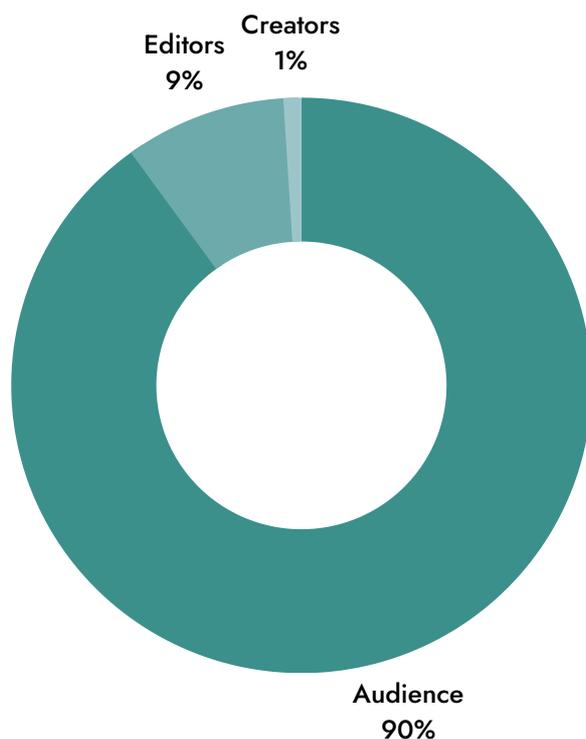
Chapter 3: How to keep an online startup community thriving?

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10 TIPS FOR INCREASING ONLINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

According to research, 90% of community members are lurkers (people who read or observe but do not contribute). But, instead of being discouraged by this, use it as information about your members and as a reminder to set realistic goals.

The 90-9-1 Principle: How Users Participate in Social Communities



The following tips are meant to get lurkers to join in and help their community grow, making it more fun for everyone.

1 START FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Finding a role model is the easiest way to set the framework for your upcoming community. Put together a list of the aspects of other communities you enjoy and those you find frustrating. However, keep in mind that you are creating your own community, and it should reflect your values.

Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- What keeps me returning to these communities?
- What made me feel special?
- What is something I would change?

2 OFFER ENGAGING CONTENT

Deliver what you've promised your members. Try to provide new and exciting content consistently. Offer guides, tutorials, and other resources to help members learn and grow, and help them when they need it.

3 ENCOURAGE INTERACTION

Provide opportunities for members to connect with one another and to share their thoughts and ideas. Facilitate engagement by starting discussions, answering their questions, and creating polls.

Chapter 3: How to keep an online startup community thriving?

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4 EMPOWER USER - GENERATED CONTENT

The best way to get people to participate is to ask them to tell you about their experiences. Utilizing UGC is simple because it can be done in a variety of ways, including images, videos, reviews, testimonials, and even podcasts.

5 INCREASE RESPONSIVENESS

The conversation goes both ways, so try to answer as many comments or questions as possible to make sure everyone is heard. If the topic isn't in your domain, try to find a member who knows the answer or is more knowledgeable in the area.

6 HONOR REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

Show appreciation for members who actively participate in the community by recognizing their contributions. Rewarding constructive comments brings significant value to the community by fostering objectivity.

7 INVOLVE MEMBERS IN THE GROWTH PROCESS

Be transparent and communicate about the future plans for your community. Practice co-creation, listen to your members' opinions, and allow them to participate in decision-making.

8 HOST EVENTS

As your community grows, you will attract more experienced people who are already popular among your members.

Use these authentic connections to organize events such as AMAs, interviews, podcasts, and webinars. This is a fantastic way to boost your community and give its members a sense of exclusivity.

9 DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES AMONG MEMBERS

Assigning tasks to active members has two benefits: it makes things easier for you, and their involvement in the community will encourage others to act, creating the impression of a safe and active environment.

10 IMPLEMENT GAMIFICATION

Leveraging the competitiveness of your members keeps them engaged. You can choose a reward system based on what your community's favorite platform has to offer. Members may be more likely to stay active and post content if they can earn badges and titles for doing so.

By using these tips and listening to what your community wants, you can keep people interested, make them feel like they belong, and get their support.

Chapter 3: How to keep an online startup community thriving?

Featuring Joana Donkova, Community Manager at GMP

How can tools help you manage your online community?

When it comes to content distribution, many platforms offer in-app features such as planning, scheduling, and keeping track of the performance of the content.

The most helpful tool you can use in your role as community manager is a moderation software platform. There are a variety of tools available. Find the one that fits your budget and tells you more about your members, so you can see how your community is put together.

We use the Common Room to moderate our community of Growth Marketing Pros.

This tool tracks the activity and responsiveness in the community. It lets you automate workflows to make onboarding and re-engagement sequences for new, active, and inactive members, as well as put them into groups.

Having information about your members will make your content better because it will be more personalized and tailored to their needs. This will help you build a real connection with your members.

28% of online communities use CRM tools to keep track of community members' data.

Here are six ways to achieve this:

Establish clear guidelines and rules.

To avoid misunderstandings, inform everyone about what is expected of them and the rules.

Monitor the community regularly.

Regularly check for inappropriate or offensive content and take action if necessary. This can include removing the content, issuing warnings, or banning members if necessary.

Encourage self-regulation.

Encourage community members to report rule-breaking behavior and help maintain a positive environment.

Provide a mechanism for appeals.

Create a way for members to appeal any actions taken against them, giving them a chance to explain why they think the action was wrong.

Be fair and consistent.

Apply the rules and guidelines the same way to everyone, and be consistent about it. Keep an open line of communication by listening to their concerns and feedback.

Re-evaluate your guidelines.

Fill in the blanks left by the feedback you received. Then, keep improving your guidelines as your community evolves.

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How to manage an online community effectively?

As a community manager, your job is to forge deeper relationships with the members. You need to help people talk about things that are important to them and make them feel welcome, heard, and valued.

Empathy is the most important attribute a community manager should have. Understanding people's pain points makes it easier to connect with them.

Another essential quality is consistency. By staying in touch with your members, giving them content, and interacting with them often, you can build a stronger relationship with them. This makes your audience feel like they're part of something big, supporting the ideals that you stand for.

Keeping a positive and welcoming environment in an online community can be hard, but there are several things you can do to do it well.

Conclusion

When you're building a community, your top priority should be making sure that people can talk to each other and to you.

Use empathy to create a space for support and collaboration where people can inspire each other with their different points of view.

The best thing about having this kind of community is that it will give you and others more chances to grow and push you in different directions as individuals.

How To Monetize Your Online Community?

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Chapter 4: How to Monetize Your Online Community?

Featuring Aleksandar Micev, Head of Growth at Solveo

Building a strong online community takes a lot of time and work, so it's important to know how to get the most out of your time and money.

In this section, we'll look at some of the potential revenue streams for an online community and offer tips on how to convert members into customers.

"When deciding on a monetization plan, it is crucial to consider the interests and needs of your community members. You must also make sure that any monetization efforts are transparent and aligned with your community's values."

*- Aleksandar Micev,
Head of Growth at Solveo.*

Membership fees.

You can charge monthly or yearly fees for different membership plans that let people access different kinds of content. Bear in mind that to gain paying members, you'll need to offer unique and exclusive content that doesn't exist elsewhere.

Advertising space.

One of the simplest methods to monetize your online community is to offer advertising space to companies in your niche. Take into account, however, that no one enjoys being spammed, which is why native advertising is a good alternative to traditional promotional materials.

Keeping the following in mind will make it easier for you to execute this:

- Running paid advertisements is acceptable as long as they benefit the community.
- Accepting low-quality content should be avoided because it will harm your reputation and the loyalty of your members.

Affiliate marketing and cross-selling.

Collaborating with other businesses to create special offers exclusive to your community members can increase your revenue and help increase sales for other startups. It also gives the members a sense of exclusivity.

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Donations and crowdfunding.

Providing great value is recognized and appreciated, so to keep doing a great job, people will willingly support you. When you ask people in your community for contributions to help your community, you give them the opportunity to donate based on their own preferences and income.

Paid events.

By inviting well-known people to webinars, workshops, or "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) sessions, you can charge a fee and promote the event as a chance for your members to network and work together in a unique way. Because you already know what their pain points are, you can offer 1:1 calls in the form of brainstorming sessions, consulting, or coaching.

Sponsored newsletter.

You can offer subscription plans and monetize by creating a newsletter with unique and valuable content.

Once your newsletter is well-known, you can let businesses sponsor it in exchange for advertising and content placement.

E-book sales.

Leading an online community provides you with a unique opportunity to look into the minds of your potential readers, figure out what type of content they want, and start writing. You earn more and your customers trust you more when you sell your e-book directly rather than through a third-party website.

Online courses.

Most online communities are based on learning. Start selling your expertise and knowledge on the topics you're most confident in, and teach people new skills while also keeping them interested in your brand.

E-commerce.

You can set up an e-commerce shop, offering your products or merchandise. This can be expanded through collaborating with other members of your community.

Recruitment space.

Creating a platform where people can share their portfolios and employers can advertise open positions can be used as a monetization strategy by charging a fee to be featured.

Conclusion

Given how much work it takes to run a successful online community, it is a good idea to turn it into an additional revenue stream for your brand. You should monetize your community because what you're doing is work. Bringing people together around a common interest is no easy task. And you should be paid for it.

The possibilities are endless, and once you've established your community, you'll know what model of monetization works best for you.

Interview with Wes Bush - The Founder of an Online Community with 15K members

5

Chapter 5: Interview with Wes Bush, the founder of Product Led - an online community with 15K members



Wes Bush is the founder and president of the Product-Led Institute. He spends his days there teaching SaaS companies how to flip the traditional sales playbook and use the Product-Led growth method to turn on their growth engine.

He is the bestselling author of Product-Led Growth and a Product-Led Growth pioneer, and he has challenged an entire industry to come up with a better way to approach SaaS growth.

We had the pleasure of speaking with him and having him answer questions about the success of the world's largest Product Led community, which he founded. You can find more information or join it here:

<https://productled.com/community>.

Why did you choose to build an online community? Is it connected to your company's purpose?

W: "Initially, this community just started off with me posting on Twitter, saying, "Hey, I'm really into product-led growth and would love to learn more about this with others." I just posted it, a friend shared it, and then all of a sudden there were 50 people interested, and I was like, "Wow, there is a community here!"

Previously, it was just me discussing growth online. It was odd that there weren't many people talking about it. So it was just a place where people could discuss it and where we could learn more about it. It just grew organically to over 15 thousand people."

Is it connected to your company's purpose?

W: "Yes, it totally is. We believe that people should be able to get answers to their questions about our company, "Productled". I also believe that the community played a big part in building a successful business. It is really at the core of it."

What was the goal of creating your community, monetization, sales, or something else?

W: "What distinguishes our company is what we actually did. We didn't start with the intention of monetizing these people someday.

Chapter 5: Interview with Wes Bush, the founder of Product Led - an online community with 15K members

That was not the business model. We are working on the antifragile business model, so a percentage of our revenue is tied to sponsorships.

Whatever we make through sponsorship, we basically give away for free. It's a no-brainer. I really believe that free value is the best way to grow anything, and this is how we're moving ahead. So it's all part of the mission."

What approaches did you use to attract community members?

"The community has always been on our website. It's gone from being the main call to action to now being a secondary one. Most people are unaware that the majority of people who join this community are invited by others. I consider that to be one of the best characteristics of a strong community. It's like, "Would your community die if it weren't promoted?" I think there are a lot of communities out there that would turn into crickets without promotion. Of course, there will always be some churn in any community, just as there will be churn in any product. But will it maintain itself and actually grow without advertising? I would worry more about that."

How many resources do you dedicate to retention and engagement (time, money, people...)?

W: "I will probably say "not enough." To put it as simply as possible, the community is managing itself.

The most difficult issue as the community grows is simply keeping up.

1 Engagement. It might feel like a small community, but there are a lot of people there.

2 We take care to completely remove all spammers. For example, if we catch someone posting a self-promotional link, we don't even contact them most times; we just cut them off. It's important to have a firm policy that is actually implemented.

The content itself is a primary resource. You are the one who generates and stimulates many of the questions at first, but over time, the community must do the majority of the heavy lifting on its own."

How did you choose a platform adequate for your needs?

W: "We use Slack. It was simply the one I was already familiar with from previous use."

How do you keep your community members engaged?

W: "This is actually more or less on autopilot. If we don't post for, say, a month, there will still be a lot of posts in the community.

But a post doesn't necessarily mean engagement. For me, engagement means people actually commenting on stuff.

Chapter 5: Interview with Wes Bush, the founder of Product Led - an online community with 15K members

I'll be paying more attention to that as time goes on. I think a post has good engagement if it has more than three comments, and if it has five or eight comments, that's even better.

If I notice that someone asks a good question but does not frame it correctly, I advise them to delete it and resubmit it if they want some good responses.

Initially, it was just me, but we soon had two community managers looking for and assisting them with some of those posts. We also place a high value on introductions, as they are a mandatory part of the onboarding process."

Given that the community currently has 15K members did your strategy change?

W: "No. I think it's just been the same. It's the core of our business.

We welcome everyone to the Product-Led Free community, which is a free plan. Our goal here is to connect and help each other out, and it's really more of a peer-led group.

We also have paid programs, and the main difference there is that the people you get your questions answered by are actually experienced, certified product-led coaches.

We basically offer the free version as a test, and if you like this community, we're all here for each other, but if you want more, there's also a paid version."

Do you recommend startup founders to build an online community?

W: "Yes, I do, but make sure you understand what you're getting into because it's a lot of work. You'll definitely need someone to manage it someday if you want to keep growing it.

Our community isn't just for people who are genuinely interested in product-related topics; I also use it to get feedback on specific issues from there, like gathering opinions from members when considering new activities. Members know that I started the community, so they will talk to me or answer my questions.

That is one obvious self-serving use of the community.

But, beyond that, I believe it simply becomes a place where people can discuss topics, get feedback on them, and have some really great interactions with one another.

So, yeah, I'd definitely recommend it, but with a warning: there's a lot going on!

Cheers!"

Conclusion

Community and community-led growth are becoming more important to startups. Online communities have the potential to assist your entire organization. An active online community can help with marketing, customer service, sales, product development, and a lot of other things.

When you take a community-based approach, you're not just broadcasting your messages to the public; rather, you're attracting people who are genuinely interested in what you have to offer.

With the help of community-based marketing, you can make potential customers and clients feel like they belong to your business.

Create an environment where people feel like they can learn from each other and have memorable experiences that will keep them coming back. Also, make sure you're using the appropriate community-based technology to host your members.

If you've provided them with a valuable space, valuable connections and networking with peers, and valuable information to help them avoid costly mistakes and make good decisions, they'll be more likely to consider you when it comes time to choose a new supplier, agency, technology, etc.

References:

[CMXHub](#), [GlobalWebIndex](#), [Slideshare](#), [Forrester](#), [Coherent Market Insights](#), [Nielsen Norman Group](#)

About Us



Solveo is a strategic design and innovation consultancy.

We are experienced professionals with a shared enthusiasm for business innovation and design. With over six years of expertise, we successfully helped over 100 international companies launch new products and services.

Our holistic strategic approach ensures a successful launch by empathizing with customers, analyzing the customer journey across all touchpoints, developing a clear value proposition, and building and executing a communication and marketing strategy.

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