B2B Communities- What Works

What we’ve learned in the past ten years...

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Our Clients at Impact Interactions

- Cisco
- AARP
- SAP
- Intel
- ACS
- NetApp
- SHCDIRECT
- NEA
Experience at Participate Systems
(aka Participate.com)
B2B Communities – What Works
What we’ve learned in the past ten years...

- B2C vs B2B Interactions
- Reaching Decision Makers
- How to Use Twitter/Facebook/etc
- Gaining Internal Executive Support
Don’t Confuse B2B Management With B2C

• Despite different audiences, far too many people believe that B2B Communities should be managed like B2C Communities
  – Freedom from Company Influence which “interferes” with the natural evolution of the community (“The Man” Syndrome)
  – No Marketing
The Reality - B2B Community Users Have Higher Expectations Than B2C Users

• Unlike B2C communities, B2B members expect to be “marketed to”
  – Difference between Marketing and Hard Sell Sales
• Our research suggests two main reasons that visitors go to B2B communities:
  – To resolve support issues
  – To learn more about a product or solution prior to purchase
• B2B Community Survey Research From Multiple Client Communities
  – 35-40% of B2B community visitors visit to gather information for purchasing decisions
  – Over 60% of members were influenced to buy based on something they read or watched in the community
  – Senior executives use community to build business cases for purchasing upgrades and new solutions
    • They delegate information gathering though...
The Relationship Factor

- In B2C communities, members feel a large company presence is stifling
- In B2B, members want to engage with company staff
  - Survey research by Impact Interactions reveals that a lack of company involvement in community increased use of other channels such as email or phone to obtain information available in the community (ROI declines too)

- Strong company participation results in:
  - Higher level of brand loyalty
  - Higher customer satisfaction
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The Elusive BDM (Business Decision Maker)

- Executives place value on being able to gain information quickly using online resources and as a result have higher customer satisfaction ratings for companies offering communities
  - Want customer success stories, company view of the market and future, downloadable presentation
  - Information must be current and easy to find
What Our Research Says

• Don’t be all things to all people with your community
  – C-level, BDMs, and Upper level influencers want to engage with peers not all users of your product
  – Most BDMs don’t participate in forums due to time constraints

• Focus community efforts and resources on your key drivers of economic value for your organization
  – BDMs and influencers for marketing communities
  – End users for support communities
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Third Party Applications are Beacons, Not Community Substitutes

- Use Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, etc. to send traffic to specific landing page prior to your community
  - Measure referrals from each third party application (your clicks)
  - The call to action (registration for a whitepaper & community) ‘unmasks’ the visitor
  - By using a unique landing page with call to action, you have a measurable starting point
  - Track transactional activity of those members registering on the specific landing page to uncover the value
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Confidence In Tangible Results Is Required

• By now, most senior executive understand the need to build relationships online. However, you must be able to answer their questions clearly
  – Expected results that tie into concrete business objectives
  – Criticism of the brand, company, etc. (the 5,000 lb gorilla in the room)
  – Resources required to run the project
  – Qualitative insight
Three Measurement Categories

- Traffic – How many?
  - Visitors, Visits, Page views, Referrers, Posts, Uploads, etc.

- Behavior – What did they do? Who are they?
  - Page views/Visit, Posts/Visitor, New Registrations/First Time Visitors, Repeat Visitors, Subscriptions, % Customers, etc.

- Value – What did we gain by offering the community?
  - Revenue, Leads, Lower Support Costs, Brand Awareness, Purchase Influence, Insight

Traffic & Behavior DO NOT EQUAL VALUE (but they do help drive it)
Pass The Skeptic Test By Being Realistic

- Economics are important, especially today
  - Soft value propositions will get you a soft budget that is easily cut
  - Overly optimistic projections will lead to overly optimistic value claims
  - There is not a single software vendor that is perfect for every deployment so expect cost over-runs for professional services, customization efforts, widget development, etc.
What Do Executives Want? Results – So Get Your Reporting in Shape Before You Launch

• Reporting should be detailed enough to meet needs while avoiding overload
  – Executive Summary focused on Value with insight into why community is performing or not performing
    • You must tie your efforts to clearly defined objectives
    • Business results not traffic results
  – Details on the tactics that are providing the components of value
    • Promotion \(\rightarrow\) Conversion \(\rightarrow\) Lead in CRM
    • Usage \(\rightarrow\) Member Response \(\rightarrow\) Cost Avoidance
  – Traffic measurements
    • Referral data, visits, visitors, contributions, reads, etc.
    • Conversion and Engagement
  – Qualitative insight
QUESTIONS?

Impact Interactions provides strategy consulting, project management, executive reporting, and moderation services for online communities and social networks. We develop and execute creative interactive strategies which can dramatically improve your online results. Drawing on our expertise developed from engagements with leading organizations such as AARP, the American Chemical Society, Cabelas, Cisco, Intel, NetApp, SAP, and others, Impact Interactions delivers results to exceed your organization’s goals. To learn more about us, please contact us.

Contact Us

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