



FEVER BEE'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY RHETORIC

By Richard Millington

Adapted by Gregory Russo



WHY PARTICIPATE IN A COMMUNITY?

Why should you participate in your community?

Why not just remove the bad stuff and not get involved?

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE?

HOW DOES IT HELP THE COMMUNITY?

1. It Increases the Level of Activity:
 - By participating you're increasing the number of active members (by one, at least).
 - You'll increase the number of notifications being sent out. The more notifications, the more reminders for members to visit and participate themselves.
 - This is CRITICAL at the early stages of development.



2. People Know Who The Community Manager Is:

- By participating you're increasing your name recognition.
- Members will know to contact you with problems and how to do so.

3. It Shows Members That The Organization Cares About the Community:

- If no one from your organization participates, it suggests you don't care about the community.
- Learn from members, interact with them, and give them a connection to your organization.



MOST IMPORTANT REASON?

GAIN.

INFLUENCE.





INFLUENCING YOUR COMMUNITY

If you create a community over which you have no influence, it's hard to harvest value from that community

BEHAVIORAL GOALS

- Think of behaviors you want your members to undertake:
 - Ask questions about specific topics
 - Give feedback
 - Share knowledge
 - Welcome newcomers
 - Attend events
 - Engagement that benefits your company
- How do you get them to do this?



YOUR SPECIAL POWERS (ARE NOT THAT IMPRESSIVE)

- As the Community Manager, you have four core powers:
 - The ability to post and highlight content
 - The ability to remove Bad Stuff
 - The ability to make changes to the platform (or change platforms entirely)
 - Access to the brand and its leaders
- That's less power than it sounds.
- You can post content, highlight material, change the site, and tell members to pay attention to or do something but...
- Unfortunately for you, people don't particularly LIKE being told what to do. Many will ignore you, a fair number will completely reject you.
- See Gretchin Rubin's [talk on the four personality types](#).





HOW TO BECOME INFLUENTIAL IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If you want to influence the community, you have to *gain influence within that community*.

So how do you become influential?

THE ROAD TO INFLUENCE

- There are two broad routes to influence:
 1. Build relationships with people that have influence, much like Tim Ferriss.
 2. Participate in a way that gains you influence.
- Think of the most influential people you know. They probably fall in one of the following categories:
 1. They're very likeable people.
 2. They have given/shared a lot so people want to help them back.
 3. They are widely known as a true expert in their field.



IN OTHER WORDS...

- We can simplify these three paths to influence as:
 1. Likeability
 2. Reciprocity
 3. Expertise
- If you want to gain influence in your community, pick one of these strategies and stick with it.





LIKEABILITY

Being very likable is a powerful way to gain influence.

TO BE LIKEABLE, YOU HAVE TO APPLY TWO ATTRIBUTES TO EVERY POST YOU MAKE

1. Be Positive:

- Positive people are significantly more liked than negative people.
- Be upbeat and optimistic in every member interaction
- Inject positive emotional language into discussions and speak often about community opportunities.
- Highlight the positive side of potentially negative events.

2. Be Friendly:

- Interact directly with large numbers of members every day.
- Find out how members are getting on.
- Active, Friendly, Frequent.



SOME TIPS FROM DALE CARNEGIE:

- Show genuine interest in other people.
- Talk in terms of the other person's interest.
- Make the other person feel important, and do it sincerely.
- Show respect for people's opinions.
- Admit mistakes.
- Appeal to noble motives.
- Show praise.
- Don't criticise or complain.





RECIPROCITY

If an individual gives another a gift, they are likely to receive one too.

RECIPROCITY IS A SOCIAL LAW

- As highlighted by Robert Cialdini: action is met with reciprocated action.
- Positive reciprocity builds trust between members.
- Negative reciprocity starts a downward spiral.
- Not all actions are of equal value; reciprocity is not necessarily even.
- You can use this social law to gain influence within your community...



...BUT YOU HAVE TO HELP THEM FIRST

- You can increase your influence within the community by initiating a large number of reciprocity cycles.
- Reach out to members: ask them what they're working on, what they're struggling with, what they would like to get out of the community, and where they would like to be in the future.
- Then, help them get there. Very often that's as simple as sending members relevant articles, information, and news that would benefit them.
- Over time, you will have a large number of people who want to help you.





EXPERTISE

The mantra to this popular approach
is *interact less, but better.*

BE THE EXPERT

- Provide remarkable value, expertise, or insight in *every* post you make.
- The objective is to be perceived as a highly regarded authority on the topic.
- Take the time in every contribution to ensure it's unique and adds insight/value that cannot be gained from elsewhere.
- This will be in the form of exclusive information, a deeper analysis of the situation or a unique opinion/perspective to the discussion.



EXCLUSIVITY IS KEY

- Don't spend much time trying to interact with every individual.
- Rather, make sure your own interactions are consistently demonstrating expertise.
- Every contribution you make will be important to members and therefore both respected and anticipated.



THE CHALLENGE IS STICKING WITH IT

- When we tell community professionals about these approaches, they usually claim “*I’m going to do all 3!*”

~Then fail to properly do any of the three.~

- Just pick **one** and consistently stick with it.
- In our experience likability is most popular (but most difficult), reciprocity is most reliable (but time consuming), and expertise is the easiest.






A FEW DON'TS

Just say no.

DON'T ACT LIKE A GOD

- The traditional approach to managing communities was to act like god, an omnipotent, omniscient, unbiased figure who removed the bad stuff without ever being actively involved in the community.
 - This approach was designed to achieve one aim; members wouldn't attack you for being biased.
 - The problem with this approach is members would never really know you. Worse, *the more unbiased you try to be the more biased you are perceived to be.*
- 

DON'T ACT LIKE A CORPORATE DRONE

- Too often we get discussions like this →
- "*MB_Melissa*" might sincerely be looking forward to hearing what you think. You doubt it though, right?
- It sounds like she wanted to release some news and then segue (not segway!) into a strange discussion

Cadillac Product Discussion (hosted by MB_Melissa)



MB_Melissa on Mar 17, 2011 10:07 PM

[Subscribe to be notified about changes to this discussion](#)

Cadillac had a strong February sales month, up 60% due to the success of their CTS and DTS models (each more than doubled their sales in February), as well as the SRX. Jim O'Donnell, President and CEO of BMW North America, was recently quoted in Business Week, saying that Cadillac's edgy styling and its popular SRX SUV has helped the brand emerge as a legitimate competitor to BMW. "There's a new generation of people buying Cadillacs," O'Donnell said. "They used to say that people wouldn't buy their father's Cadillac. Well, now it's the grandchildren that are buying them."

What do you think of this statement and the Cadillac product line, particularly the CTS, CTS-V Coupe, and SRX? Do you think Cadillac is gaining an edge on BMW?

I'm looking forward to hearing what you think!



- That was an extreme example of how most organisations interact with their members.
- They use phrases like *"tell us what you think," "share your story," "we want to hear from you."*
- These sound insincere: **Don't use them.**
- They're usually the least popular areas of the community site, even when given premium real-estate. →

Lounge Area		Posts
<p>Tell us what you think?</p> <p>We're really excited about our new community but we want to know what you think. Please use this discussion area to share any ideas and suggestions you have to make it even better.</p> <p>Latest Topic - Remove & add...</p>		3106
<p>Computers & Gaming</p> <p>This section is for all the computer geeks out there to share everything from your game cheats to the latest computer fixes, go easy on the jargon...</p> <p>Latest Topic - high crc errors on seagate hard drive</p>		24044
<p>Technology, Tips, Tricks and Cool Stuff</p> <p>Found a really great gadget? Or simply have some technological wizardry you want to talk about, be sure to let our community know.</p> <p>Latest Topic - I cannot use the airprint feature on my new printe...</p>		12156
<p>Hobbies and Interests</p> <p>Want to share your hobbies and interests? Why not see if any of our community share the same interests?</p> <p>Latest Topic - Family Trees</p>		1971
<p>TalkTalk Labs Trials</p> <p>This section of the forum is where you will find information on the latest product trials and how to take part.</p> <p>Latest Topic - HG635 5ghz speed drop</p>		8589
<p>Entertainment, Sports & Humour</p> <p>Discuss your sports & entertainment interest here and don't forget to share the occasional joke just remember to keep it clean!!</p> <p>Latest Topic - Careless whisper</p>		24979
<p>Introductions and Anything Else</p> <p>New to the community? Why not say hello and tell us a little about yourself.</p> <p>Latest Topic - Kitchens Direct Liverpool</p>		116300

THERE'S A BETTER WAY

- Worse yet, those phrases have very negative connotations. When was the last time you responded to one of these remarks?
- Stop posting or initiating discussions like this! There is a better approach, one based upon the basic principles of how real people (like us), interact with one another.
- You need to have rules and be a real human being. Take sides if you like, but follow the rules.
- If you follow just these basic principles, you'll be far more successful.





THE BASIC RULES OF PARTICIPATING IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

The key principle here is to act like a human being.

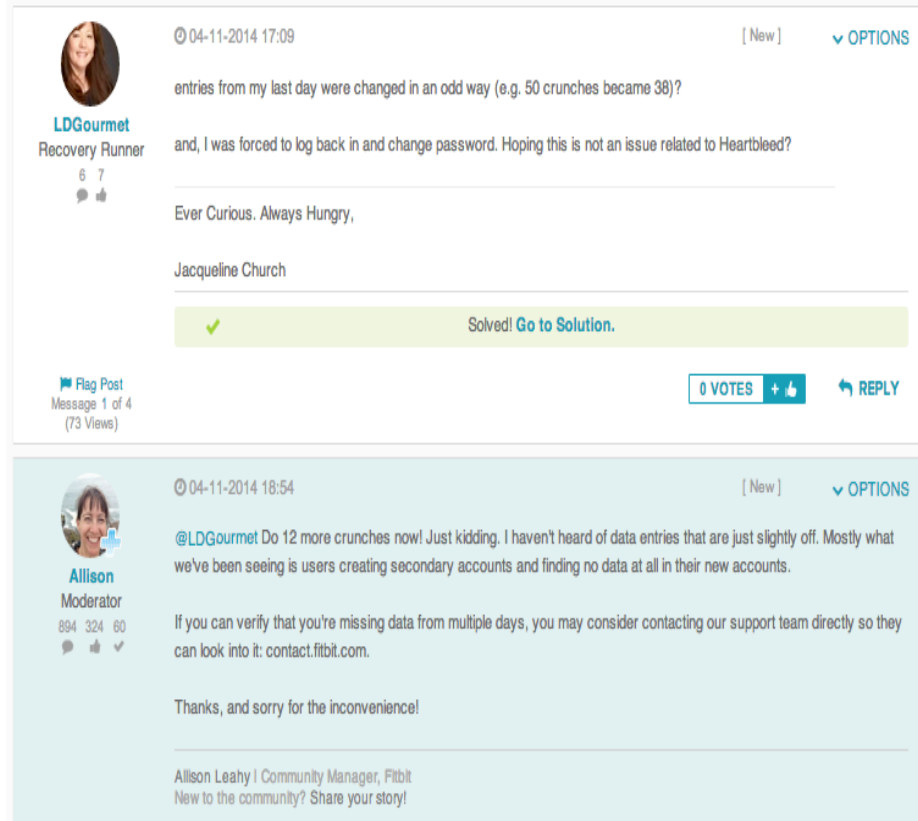
WRITE IN THE FIRST PERSON

- Above all, speak in the first person. You are a person: talk like one.
- *“I think...”* > *“We think...”*
- When you use “we” or “us” the recipient doesn’t believe anyone will see the response.
- Members want to interact with real people so give them that experience.



HAVE A PERSONALITY

- Banter, use jokes, engage honestly with your members.
- Refer to members by their real names whenever possible.
- See FeverBee course graduate Allison Leahy's example →



The screenshot displays a Fitbit community thread. The top post is from user **LDGourmet** (Recovery Runner), dated 04-11-2014 17:09. The post asks if data entries from the previous day were changed in an odd way (e.g., 50 crunches became 38) and mentions being forced to log back in and change a password. The post has 6 replies and 7 likes. A green banner indicates the issue is "Solved! Go to Solution." The bottom post is from **Allison** (Moderator), dated 04-11-2014 18:54. Allison responds with a humorous suggestion to do 12 more crunches, explaining that the issue is likely due to users creating secondary accounts. She provides instructions on how to verify missing data and contact support. The post has 894 replies, 324 likes, and 60 retweets. Allison's bio identifies her as a Community Manager at Fitbit.

LDGourmet
Recovery Runner
6 7

04-11-2014 17:09 [New] OPTIONS

entries from my last day were changed in an odd way (e.g. 50 crunches became 38)?

and, I was forced to log back in and change password. Hoping this is not an issue related to Heartbleed?

Ever Curious. Always Hungry,

Jacqueline Church

Solved! Go to Solution.

Flag Post
Message 1 of 4
(73 Views)

0 VOTES + REPLY

Allison
Moderator
894 324 60

04-11-2014 18:54 [New] OPTIONS

@LDGourmet Do 12 more crunches now! Just kidding. I haven't heard of data entries that are just slightly off. Mostly what we've been seeing is users creating secondary accounts and finding no data at all in their new accounts.

If you can verify that you're missing data from multiple days, you may consider contacting our support team directly so they can look into it: [contact.fitbit.com](https://www.fitbit.com/support).

Thanks, and sorry for the inconvenience!

Allison Leahy | Community Manager, Fitbit
New to the community? Share your story!

EXPRESS OPINIONS

- Express your opinion on a wide variety of issues – **especially** those unrelated to the business.
- If you disagree with someone about a topic, feel free to say you disagree with their point of view and then add your own - and why you have that view.
- Debate the reasons why you have your differing points of view, not the points of view themselves.
- It's a lot easier to get the opinions of other people if you post your own.



PARTICIPATE IN ALL DISCUSSIONS

- Don't only participate in discussions about your brand, participate in all discussions.
- Show that you care about members beyond any products/services.



RESPOND TO CRITICISM HONESTLY

- People **will** criticise you. They **will** criticise your organisation.
- You need to listen, show you've listened, and respond to that criticism.
- If you need more information, say you're going to get more information.
- Summarise their point when responding.



THE “TWO IN THREE” RULE

- Try to make sure no more than 66% of visible recent posts in the community are posted by you.
- Don't over-participate, but don't panic and under-participate either!
- You need to be a visible active member in the community.

Topic	Replies	Last post
Sticky: What is everyone doing about heartbleed? new	5	by Rosemary O'Neill 04/11/2014 - 13:59
Sticky: Is our first Sense of Community Index score of 1.49 any good? new	9	by Richard Millington 04/06/2014 - 20:55
Sticky: What are you working on right now? updated (Page: 1, 2)	54	by Richard Millington 04/04/2014 - 08:14
Something I've Been Working On: The Holy Grail of Communities new	4	by Richard Millington 04/12/2014 - 13:41
Hi, I'm the new CM! new	3 View 3 new	by Gregory Russo 04/10/2014 - 21:11
Can anyone share experiences on launching/ managing an online community in Japan? new	2	by Richard Millington 04/10/2014 - 14:29
Where to get liability insurance for an online community? new	1	by Richard Millington 04/10/2014 - 14:27
Personality test to support recognition of community hosts		by Laura Brook 04/10/2014 - 13:34
Anonymity vs Attribution new	2	by Gregory Russo 04/08/2014 - 17:16



THE “*THREE-POSTS PER THREAD*” RULE

- Don't get sucked into discussions which become fights with members.
 1. Post your thoughts.
 2. If someone disagrees, clarify and summarise your argument.
 3. If someone still disagrees, say you respect their opinion but will have to agree to disagree on this one.



REFER TO PEOPLE BY NAME

- Don't refer to the anonymous, broad “community.”
- Refer to specific groups, people, or interests within that community.
- Be a member of the community, not an observer.



PHRASE QUESTIONS AS PERSONAL QUESTIONS

- You need to initiate discussions, but do it genuinely.
- Highlight:
 - a) Why you're initiating that discussion
 - b) Why you're initiating that discussion now
 - c) How that response to that discussion helps
 - d) The people you might want to respond to that discussion



EXPRESS EMOTIONS

- You are a real person (we assume).
- That means expressing when you're happy, sad, or angered by a situation.
- However, *declare* your emotional state, don't *act* your emotional state.
- "*This problem makes me angry*" is better than "*This problem is such BS!!!*"



PICK OUT SPECIFIC PEOPLE TO REPLY

- If you want a response, be clear about the type of people (or, better, specific people) you want to reply.
- Example: *"I'd love to hear what the Alcsor employees think about this."*
- Or: *"I'd love to hear what Mike Smith and Susan Wright think about this."*



DON'T APOLOGIZE

- One caveat to acting human is the danger of apologising.
- As any law student will tell you, apologies can have legal consequences.
- They can be considered admissions of guilt/negligence.
- There are times to apologise for mistakes, but check the legal implications of doing so first.
- Understand, sympathise, but don't apologise.





THE SCIENCE OF PARTICIPATION

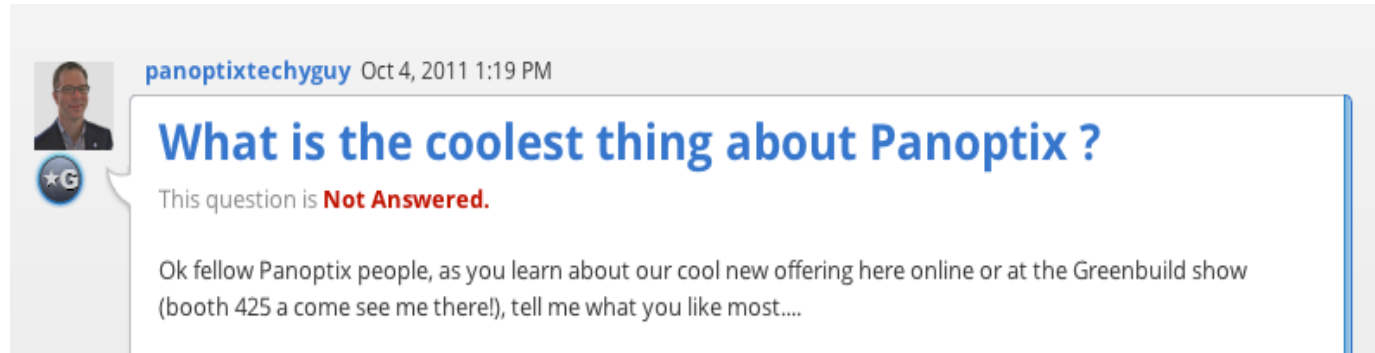
There's a right way and a wrong way.

WHY DO THEY RESPOND?

- People respond to discussions because they want to:
 1. Help the original poster (efficacy/validation)
 2. Build a relationship with the original poster (affiliation)
 3. Impress the community (positive distinctiveness)
- Most people create discussions which don't allow members to do any of these.



INSTEAD, THEY INITIATE DISCUSSIONS LIKE THIS:



- Or this (via the terrific Condescending Corporate Brand Page)



WE'RE TERRIBLE

- Too often we wonder why people don't respond to the discussions we attempt to initiate.
- The answer is we're usually terrible at initiating them.
- The above were warped examples, of course. None of us would ever initiate a discussion like that.
- However, I'm betting many of us still initiate discussion which fall flat, sound phoney, and violate basic principles of interacting with people.



EXAMPLE

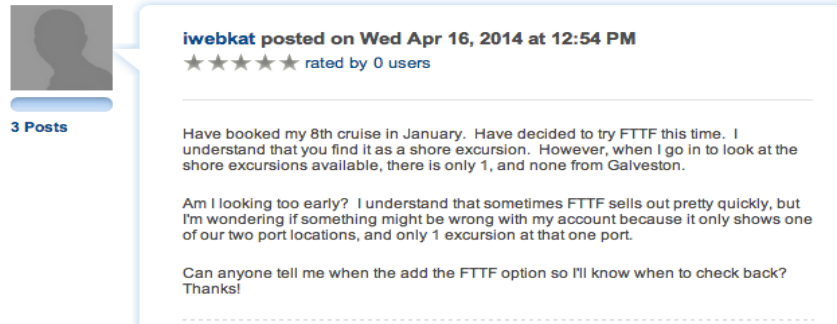
*“Joe Smith recently said that cars of the future will be self-driving and fuel efficient.
Do you agree? Let us know what you think”*

- This fails because it is impersonal. It doesn't really highlight why people would want to respond, and feel like it's just trying to generate activity.
- We pick up on a variety of cues in these situations.
- We pick up on the original poster name, we pick up on the words and language use, we pick up on the intent.
- The post above feels (just *feels*) like an attempt to initiate a discussion for the sake of having activity.



BETTER EXAMPLE

- Compare with how real members talk to each other:



- Notice in the above the reference to the individual. This is the individual testimonial. This was discovered by Aguello et al. (2006) to increase the quantity (and quality) of responses.
- People are more likely to respond to a discussion you post if they know how it helps you. If you post a testimonial about its personal relevance to you, more people are likely to respond.




STILL BETTER EXAMPLE

- Try this post from the Warrior Forum:



11-08-2009, 08:00 PM


#1

Paul Myers
Zen Redneck
War Room Member



Join Date: Jul 2002
Location: Erie, PA
Posts: 15,534
Blog Entries: 4
Thanks: 2,239
Thanked 15,607 Times in 4,436 Posts

Social Networking
 

 **What to do if you're desperate**

We've been getting a lot of threads here lately from people talking about tough times. Clearly, some are for real. Others seem a bit... iffy. One thing we can be sure of is that having a bunch of these scattered through the database isn't the best way to help anyone.

So, here's the suggestion: Pretend this is a request from someone who's in a tight spot, and needs to figure out how to make some money quick. We don't know if they're on the verge of getting kicked out into the street tomorrow, or if they've got a couple of months to get something going.

Give your best suggestions, starting off with the required skills and the timeline you're addressing. Let's get one thread with a ton of ways for people to handle a tough spot.

Then, when the threads come up, we can point them here. The folks who need advice get it - a lot of it in one place - and you don't have to re-type your answers every time.

Who wants to start it off?

Paul

Edited to add: AlexCN has created a handy index that you may find helpful in getting to a useful answer more quickly. You can find that here: [What To Do If You're Desperate Index](#)

- This post received 1,022 responses over 4 years.



THINGS TO NOTE

- Notice the testimonial at the top “*we have been getting*” (this translates to: “*this is why I’m asking the question*”). Notice the easy reference to “*Warriors*” (symbol) and the casual language of “*iffy,*” “*bunch of these,*” “*folks,*” etc.
- This is how normal people talk to one another.
- Notice the short length of the post, the easy spacing of the paragraphs. A paragraph is never more than 3 lines – even when it might appear strange (the 4th paragraph begins with “*Then*”).
- Notice also the easy call to action: “*Who wants to start it?*”
- It’s asking people to self-nominate, not to “*tell us what you think*” or “*share your best example.*”




EVEN BETTER EXAMPLE

1/2/05 at 12:31am

THREAD STARTER

post #1 of 11809



iacas

5SK Director of
Instructor Development

ADMINISTRATOR

online

Joined: 11/2004, Posts:
33868

This thread typically gets started one way or another, so I may as well start it here. When you play a round of golf, pop open this thread and add a comment. Tell us your score, tell us how you played, and so on.

I'll kick it off...

Today I shot what would have been about a 78 or a 79 at my home course. Tough to say since I didn't putt (I gave myself two putts on all but three holes where I'd stuffed it within 5 feet - any missed I'd have made there I figure would have been balanced out by the five putts I had from 5-10 feet). Temporary greens, you see.

A week ago we had a foot or two of snow. Today it was 40-45 degrees and the ground was soggy, but very little snow existed. I was one of about ten golfers out there. The lack of much wind was nice - 45 degree weather plays about a club shorter.

I'll write more later. Gonna post a picture or two from my camera phone.

Note: this thread should contain only posts about your score. No replies, please!

- This post has received 11,000+ responses over the past 9 years.
- Notice the personal testimonial of the person asking the question. They succinctly explain why they're asking the question.
- Notice the spacing between the paragraphs (never more than 3 lines).
- Notice the call to action and the specifics of what the admin asks for.
- Notice the reference to the group's history. In *Introductions and Requests: Rhetorical Strategies That Elicit Responses in Online Communities*, Burke et al. (2007) note that such references increase response rates.


A SIMPLE TACTIC

- Go to any popular forum you like and list the discussions by the responses. Look at the structure and nature of those posts.
- Then click on the 'replies' option at the top.
- You can now see a list of the most popular discussions in most types of communities.



LIKE SO

- Examine the content and nature of these discussions. Steal the best ideas they have and use them in your own community.
- The best copywriters have a swipe file of great pieces of copy they've seen and can adapt to their own circumstances.
- Community professionals need the same. They need a collection of great discussions they have seen and can use in their own communities.



Topic / Topic starter	Replies	Last post
Sticky: What are you working on right now? (Page: 1, 2) by Richard Millington » 08/13/2013 - 09:54	54	by Richard Millington 04/04/2014 - 08:14
Sticky: What is everyone doing about heartbleed? by Richard Millington » 04/11/2014 - 11:27	9	by Richard Millington 04/16/2014 - 13:26
Sticky: Get YOUR Event On Our Calender new by Gregory Russo » 04/16/2014 - 21:46	0	by Gregory Russo 04/16/2014 - 21:46
Is gamification a help or a hindrance to successful community building? by Breda Doherty » 07/26/2013 - 15:02	20	by Ryan Daye 11/12/2013 - 16:56
Community Builders in San Francisco? by Carrie Melissa Jones » 09/20/2013 - 03:49	18	by Breda Doherty 03/07/2014 - 16:51



THE DANGER OF BEING TOO PHONY

- If you initiate too many discussions which sound phoney, soon people begin avoiding your discussions altogether.
- It's very difficult to move from a person that has sounded phoney for a long time to be accepted as a real human being.
- In fact, as one of our clients is now learning, it's nearly impossible (other than to make a full admission that previous posts sounded robotic and impersonal).



EVERYTHING COMES DOWN TO THIS MOMENT

- You can do everything right.
- You can build the relationships before you launch the community. You can develop the perfect platform. You can follow all the other advice we've shared.
- But your community won't succeed if you cannot initiate discussions the right way.
- Let's go through five core elements of initiating a terrific discussion.





THE FIVE CORE ELEMENTS OF INITIATING A TERRIFIC DISCUSSION

Get started right!

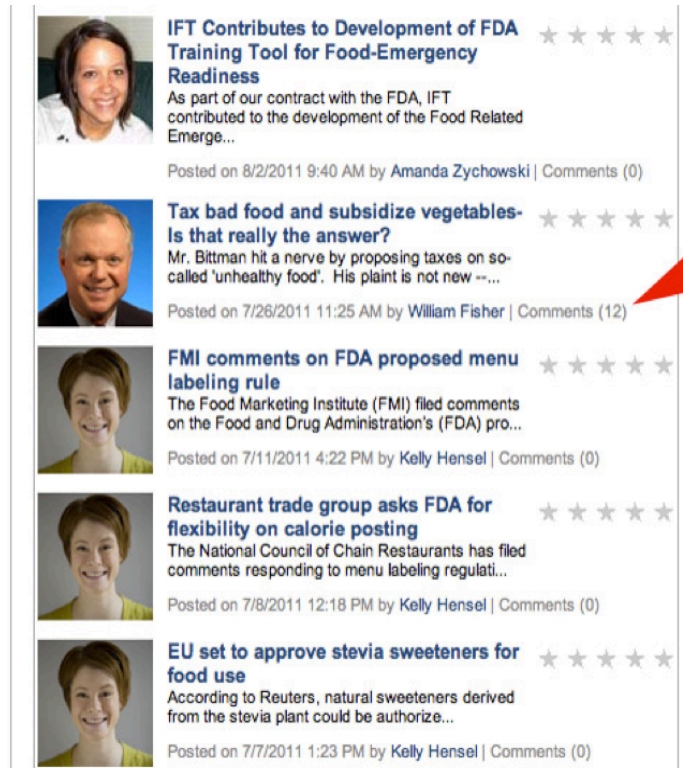
1) THE ORIGINAL POSTER

- The person that posts the topic is important. Posts from newcomers and those unfamiliar to the community tend to get less responses than those from regulars and old-timers.
- This might be because of familiarity, relationships, or regulars know how to structure discussions to get a response.
- This is another reason why you want to participate frequently, build real relationships with members, and be a known member of the community.
- It's not a big problem being from 'the brand'. It is a big problem if people don't know, like, or trust your motives.



2) THE SUBJECT LINE

- This should be either an open-ended statement or a specific question. We typically prefer questions, but it's good to vary these to keep things fresh.
- Ask the question in the subject line of the discussion itself. Notice, it's only the discussion that is asked as a question that receives a response.
- The question or statement itself depends very upon much the type of discussion you're initiating.



THE TYPE OF DISCUSSION



- Let's break discussions down into three distinct types:
 1. **Conveying information discussions:** Conveying information discussions exchange information. In most communities, these discussions receive the least response.
 2. **Bonding-related discussions:** In bonding-related discussions, members talk about their passions or share their opinions on different topics. These facilitate closer bonds between members.
 3. **Status-jockeying discussions:** In status-jockeying discussions, members talk about themselves. They talk about their own experiences, achievements, and what they have done in similar situations. Members try to generate a favourable impression of themselves amongst other members.



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Status Jockeying

Bonding

	rosie album Started by mohrt, Today 12:54 PM	Replies: 3 Views: 53
	Any Kennedy Nuts out there?? Started by Fire Lad, 08-21-2011 10:30 PM 1 2 3 4 5 ... 8	Replies: 107 Views: 1,330
	Trying out new ways to present coins Started by Siggie Palma, Yesterday 10:25 AM	Replies: 14 Views: 177
	Coin Photographing Suggestions Please! Started by phdunay, 09-28-2011 10:58 PM	Replies: 12 Views: 159
	latest mintage link Started by Danr, 08-10-2011 08:30 PM	Replies: 9 Views: 227

Conveying Information

rosie album

Hi folks,

I just thought I'd share my rosie collection, all dimes 1946-2008 including proofs and silver proofs. Mostly in uncirculated condition. Thanks for looking!

<http://s1021.photobucket.com/albums/...view=slideshow>



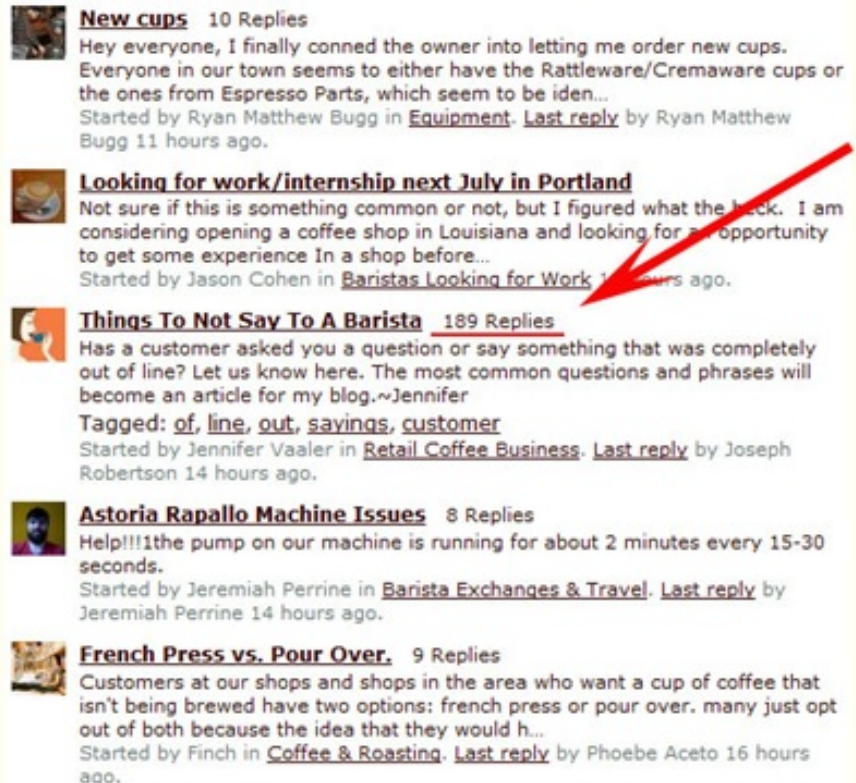
DON'T FOCUS ON CONVEYING INFORMATION DISCUSSIONS

- These fail to build relationships between members or solicit ego-investment in the community from members.
- Instead, aim to initiate, facilitate, and highlight far more bonding-related discussions than conveying information discussions.
- This is why discussions based around nostalgia, emotive topics, and what members are doing/ thinking are usually far more popular.
- Remember that you're trying to drive activity. More activity means members are returning more frequently to participate in the community.



STEAL DISCUSSIONS FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES

- For instance, this BaristaExchange discussion →
- You can steal that concept:
 - "10 things not to say to a lawyer"
 - "10 things not to say to someone with cancer"
 - "10 things not to say to a community professional"
- All of the above have generated a lot of bonding-related activity.



New cups 10 Replies
Hey everyone, I finally conned the owner into letting me order new cups. Everyone in our town seems to either have the Rattleware/Cremaware cups or the ones from Espresso Parts, which seem to be iden...
Started by Ryan Matthew Bugg in [Equipment](#). [Last reply](#) by Ryan Matthew Bugg 11 hours ago.

Looking for work/internship next July in Portland
Not sure if this is something common or not, but I figured what the heck. I am considering opening a coffee shop in Louisiana and looking for an opportunity to get some experience in a shop before...
Started by Jason Cohen in [Baristas Looking for Work](#) 14 hours ago.

Things To Not Say To A Barista 189 Replies
Has a customer asked you a question or say something that was completely out of line? Let us know here. The most common questions and phrases will become an article for my blog.~Jennifer
Tagged: [of](#), [line](#), [out](#), [savings](#), [customer](#)
Started by Jennifer Vaaler in [Retail Coffee Business](#). [Last reply](#) by Joseph Robertson 14 hours ago.

Astoria Rapallo Machine Issues 8 Replies
Help!!!!the pump on our machine is running for about 2 minutes every 15-30 seconds.
Started by Jeremiah Perrine in [Barista Exchanges & Travel](#). [Last reply](#) by Jeremiah Perrine 14 hours ago.

French Press vs. Pour Over. 9 Replies
Customers at our shops and shops in the area who want a cup of coffee that isn't being brewed have two options: french press or pour over. many just opt out of both because the idea that they would h...
Started by Finch in [Coffee & Roasting](#). [Last reply](#) by Phoebe Aceto 16 hours ago.

THE BODY OF THE MESSAGE

○ The first line of the post:

- Open with the key point.
- Repeat the subject line if necessary.
- Jump straight into the question/statement “does anyone know...”.
- Lead with the question.

○ The language (rhetoric) used:

- Use short, simple, words.
- Unless your community expects otherwise, less complex words leads to more responses. Use informal language, as explained above.
- Write in the 1st person.

○ The call to action:

- Leave a call to action which either asks for anyone to put themselves forward to reply (“*Who wants to go first?*”) or highlights a specific person(s)/group to respond (“*looking for a response from anyone with {x} background*” or “*be good to hear from Rob, Chris, or Carol on this*”).



○ **The length of the post:**

- The shorter the better (up until about 75 words).
- Typically 3 to 4 paragraphs of no longer than 3 lines each is about the right length.
- This usually means about 100 to 250 words.

○ **The length of sentences:**

- Keep sentences short and simple.
- Be liberal with your full stops (periods). If a sentence can be short, keep it short.
- IF you can break one sentence into two, break it into two.
- Use the Hemmingway approach to writing.

○ **Spacing between paragraphs/sentences:**

- Use a full paragraph every 3 to 4 lines.
- Make it easy to scan your content.

○ **Include your own testimonial:**

- Include the question's relevance to you and the community's history (if possible).
- Why are you asking the question? *Why are you asking the question now?*
- What impact will their response have to you?



THE TIMING OF THE POST (AND FREQUENCY OF POSTS)

- The time you make a post doesn't have a huge impact upon it's popularity except in communities with already considerable amounts of activity (500+ posts per day).
- The number of posts *does* have an impact. If you initiated a discussion yesterday that didn't receive a response, initiating a fresh one today is a bad idea.
- If you initiate too many discussions, you're in danger of being permanently ignored. At most, initiate a discussion once or twice a week to keep activity going. Ensure the discussion succeeds before initiating another.
- Either remove the dead discussion or prompt people to participate in the last discussion you initiated.



WHO ELSE/HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE REPLIED?

- The more people reply, the more likely they are to respond. A post with a zero post count doesn't get a good response.
- At CommunityGeek, we try to ensure every discussion has a response. Sometimes this means we reply to each other's posts. If we disagree, we say so.
- Initiating a discussion is easier, reaching out to a few people to reply is more difficult. It's worth doing.





SUSTAINING DISCUSSIONS

Keep it going!

WHEN TO PUSH

- For mature communities, this is rarely an issue.
- These communities are highly responsive and discussions tend to take care of themselves.
- For communities in the inception or establishment phase, you will often need to participate directly in existing discussions.



THE GOAL IS THREE FOLD

1. **You want to increase the quantity and quality of information being shared.**
 - When you participate in discussions, you bump up the discussion and notify previous participants that they should visit the community to participate again.
 2. **You want to increase the post count on discussions.**
 - If you've had several discussions with only 1 or 2 responses, you might want to focus on ensuring at least one post gets to the 10 responses stage.
 3. **You want to get more people involved in the discussion.**
 - If only 2 to 3 members have been involved in a potentially useful discussion, it's good to increase the visibility of the discussion so more people will be involved
- OK, but how do I do this in MY community?



RESPOND QUICKLY

- The speed of response is **critical**.
- A response today is far, far, better than a response tomorrow.
- A response this hour is far better than a response the next hour.
- Keep a special eye for posts which haven't received a response and reply to them (or prompt others to respond to these posts).
- Ideally, you want a volunteer group of 3 to 4 people who carefully watch out for new discussions and quickly respond to them.
- We use a 24 hour response rule. We want every post to receive a response within the first 24 hours.



ACKNOWLEDGE UNIQUE OR USEFUL MATERIAL

- People participate more in communities if they feel they can make unique, useful, contributions.
- If you are responding to a post, acknowledge the unique contribution of the member.
- Don't be patronizing. Don't say, "*wow, your contribution is incredibly unique and valuable.*"
- In your own response, highlight something about the post that is unique or useful. For example "*I love the idea the idea that {something relevant to the post}. It's not a topic we've seen come up before here.*"
- You can make every single poster feel they have posted something unique or useful.



ASK A CLARIFYING QUESTION

- Ask a clarifying question in your response that encourages the other person to also add further thoughts on that topic.
- Ask for more information, experience, evidence, or opinions/thoughts on something related to the post.
- You can do this a few times to boost the post count.



ADD YOUR OWN TESTIMONIAL/THOUGHTS

- As per the previous e-mail, add your own thoughts/testimonial to the topic.
- “*Personally, I’ve found this to be true when*”
- If you disagree slightly, the original poster usually returns to defend their perspective.



HIGHLIGHT SPECIFIC PEOPLE TO RESPOND

- If there are other people in the community with experience or expertise on the topic, invite them to reply by name.
- *“I’d love to hear what Joe and Eric think about it. Or anyone with experience in {x}?”*



HIGHLIGHT THE DISCUSSION

- If a discussion is particularly useful, make it a sticky thread and write a news item about the discussion.
- Send it out to people on the newsletter.

VARIABLE RESPONSES

- Always vary your own responses.
- Use the basic formula above, but vary the wording and structure to ensure you don't appear a monotonous drone.

RESPONDING TO YOUR OWN POSTS

- Occasionally, you can initiate a discussion and then reply to that post with some further information you've found.
- This ensures the discussion has at least response.





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Adapted by: Gregory Russo

