Community Building Questions

Building a community isn't always the right strategy.

Too many online communities are launched without any clear direction or purpose. A failed online community can damage your brand so it's important you get this right.

Don't be tempted to develop an online community just because everyone else is. Know exactly why you want a community. Understand what it takes to build a community. Make sure you can answer the following questions before making a final decision.

Having no community is better than having a failed community.

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The Questions

1. Why do you want an online community?

2. What are you hoping to achieve by building a community?

3. What needs will you be fulfilling for your customers by having an online community?

4. Is your product or brand interesting enough to support a community?

5. How controversial or prone to conflict will your community be?

6. What internal resources do you have to support a community?

7. Do you have enough long-term vision to achieve success?

8. Do you understand the effort involved in building a community from scratch?

9. Should you hire a professional?

10. Is your company flexible and adaptable enough for an online community?

11. Do you have complete management buy-in? If not, how will you get it?

12. What is your online community's budget?

13. Why are your competitors building or not building a community around their product or brand?

14. What will make your community unique?

15. Who are your potential members?

16. Are these people naturally communicative?

17. How technically minded are they?

18. Where will you find these potential members?

19. How will you attract these potential members?

20. Why will people join your community?

21. Why will people be active in your community?

22. How will you encourage members to create content?

23. Why will your members want to create content?

24. How will you retain members?

25. How will you use the community to build relationships with your customers?

26. Why will people recommend your community to their friends?

27. What kind of community features do you want?

28. Why will members want to use those features?

29. What community platform are you going to use?

30. How will you ensure you choose the right platform?

31. Who will be moderating the community?

32. Who will be managing the community?

33. Will your members have a role to play in managing or moderating the community?

34. Who will ultimately be in charge of the community?

35. What kind of rules or guidelines will your community have?

36. What kind of personality do you want your community to have?

37. How will you influence the atmosphere of your community?

38. What goals do you have for your community?

39. How will you measure success?

Finally...

40. Is an online community appropriate?

Note

Think seriously about consulting a community building specialist. Good ones will ask a lot of questions before deciding whether to take you on as a client.

Consider this a warm up.

About Martin Reed

Martin Reed writes about community building at [Community Spark](). He has been building online communities since 2000 and his sites have been recognised by Web User magazine and the Telegraph newspaper.

He has given community building advice to the New York City Department of Education and in May 2009 presented at the [INFORTE seminar]() in Finland. Martin has been quoted in a number of publications including Angela Connor's book, '[18 Rules of Community Engagement]()', [PDMA's Vision Magazine,]() and [Federal Computer Week]() (circulation 90,000).

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