

5 STEPS TO COMMUNITIES THAT THRIVE

Harness the power
of communities
for your business

salesforce

SELL. SERVICE. MARKET. SUCCEED.





Engaged customers in
communities spend 19% more.

– *University of Michigan*

Community is “a group of people with unique shared values, behaviors, and artifacts.”

– *The Community Roundtable*

WHAT IF

Your Customers Could:

Become your biggest public advocates

Share experiences & help others buy & use your products

Team up to address common issues

Consider your brand a valuable resource beyond transaction

Help you make better products by telling you what they need

Your Partners Could:

Collaborate with your team to evolve best practices & become more productive

Identify & act on opportunities as soon as you receive them

Team up with your service reps to provide a great customer experience

Register deals & bring you more opportunities

Accelerate business by increasing visibility into your & your partners' business

Your Vendors Could:

Get project updates in real-time

Anticipate the specific needs of your business

Accelerate projects by making every step more visible to all the right people

Coordinate every step of projects & campaigns in one place

Share records with you instantly, such as documents, invoices, & specifications

COMMUNITIES CONNECT CUSTOMERS, PARTNERS, AND EMPLOYEES TO MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

Great. You're ready to build a community—but how?
Here are 5 steps to create thriving communities.

- 1 MAP – Map Out Goals
- 2 INVEST – Invest In A Community Manager
- 3 BUILD – Build Community With Community
- 4 ENGAGE – Engage Hearts And Minds
- 5 MEASURE – Measure, Learn, Repeat

1

Map Out Goals

A successful community meets the needs of both your business and the community members.

Explore those needs, and see where they overlap. That's where your community should be.



2

Invest in a Community Manager

You want your community to bring value to all members. You've set expectations internally about what a community is, and how working together openly is different from a 1-way broadcast. Now you're ready to move your community forward, and put customers at the heart of your business.



To guide all of these efforts, you need a *Community Manager*.

This position is essential, functioning as the connective tissue of your community. The community manager is your cross-functional leader who works inside and outside company lines to make sure the community stays active and brings value.

Active community managers stop the “What ifs” and turn them into opportunities.

What if:

- Information leaks
- People complain
- Company loses control of conversation
- Company has to step in for every question

Opportunity:

- Governance and employee training
- Address concerns and create public advocates
- Community manager promotes productive conversations
- Members can answer each others’ questions, which helps community scale



3

Build Community With Community

Now that you've invested in community management, designed the community, and selected the technology, here's where the fun starts.

Start small with a core membership, gather support, build trust with the community, and start proving value. These behaviors will become the blueprint for what happens next.



Start small, with big principles: trust and shared purpose.

Community is built on trust and shared purpose. Start with a small core group of like-minded champions who are your stakeholders: customers, partners, and employees. Ask them what they need, and build it with them. When your community gives people them more value than what they put into it, they will keep returning, and be active members.

Shape your community norms:

- Encourage a culture of ownership by creating the community together
- Create a vision statement and community charter together with members
- Create a light group structure & encourage members to create their own groups
- Uphold community vision and live out best practices by example
- Learn to let go of control by empowering your community champions

4

Engage Hearts and Minds

Your community's active core group of customers, partners, and employees have been sharing, seeding great content, and building community together. Now it's time to gradually open the doors to a bigger population—or keep your community purposefully small, depending on your business goals.



Once you build it, don't leave it.

So what does it look like when people start engaging? What is your role in this? Engage openly and honestly, and continue to reset expectations internally.

Your community manager will help build engagement by:

- Developing engagement programs to draw members in
- Promoting constructive conversation and limiting destructive behaviors; upholding the charter and vision
- Creating conditions for members to easily connect and create value for and with each other
- Building community activity into things members already do
- Recruiting and engaging employees, customers, and partners in the conversation
- Developing community champions and advocates
- Promoting storytelling and curating useful content for easy access
- Discussing industry trends and provoking deep thought

After the community gets going, share that success to gain even more momentum. Share with:

- Executives, to prove value and get more \$
- Employees, to gain participation and support
- Community, to gain engagement

5

Measure, Learn, Repeat


There are many ways to measure the health of your community. Creating dashboards and a regular schedule of check-ins is just the beginning. Remember, what you measure should be defined by the goals you've identified at the onset of creating your community.



Become a learning organization.

Don't miss the opportunity to get the most value from your community investment by becoming a learning organization. A learning organization takes signals from customers, partners, and employees, doubles up on what's working, and fixes what isn't.

Remember: feedback is a gift. Look for ways to improve your fundamentals. Don't gloss over tough problems with PR. Be open and honest, but take a position. And be sure to close the feedback loop.



Measure often, and consider quantitative and qualitative indicators. Understand what success looks like, and share it with the rest of the company.

Remember, relationships take time to build. And while the benefits aren't immediate, community-building has immense and long-lasting business value.

Summary: Set the Right Expectations Internally

Today's consumers expect companies to behave—and communicate—like people.



Thanks for reading.

And remember: building relationships builds great businesses.

To find out more about how Salesforce Communities can help you sell, service, and market like never before, visit: salesforce.com/chatter/features/communities

And don't just take our word for it. See how businesses like you are building communities, and work with other community strategists in the Salesforce community: success.salesforce.com

