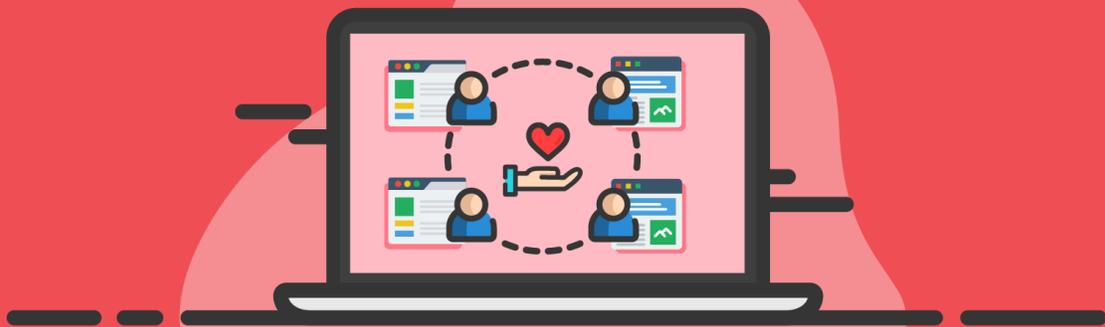


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Community-Building Tips for Online Business Owners



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Introduction

Do you feel connected to your community? Do you know who is in your community? Do you even realize there is a community?

For those of us who run websites or online businesses of our own, our platforms set the foundation for growing up a hope, a goal, and a dream. When platforms fail to live up to their design, everything around them can come crumbling down – often crushing the very hopes, goals, and dreams they were built to grow. Collapsing platforms frustrate and disappoint.

People aren't engaging with well-designed websites. People aren't engaging with great content. People are engaging with people.

In business, like every other aspect of life, it all boils down to relationships. If your platform is not producing what you envisioned, WPprosper wants to help you bring that vision to life.

It all starts with people.

Let's find your way to create a community infused platform that holds up your hopes, goals, and dreams so you and your business prosper.

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The numbers don't lie.

- **The 57% of online community members feel seen frequently or all of the time**
- **63% of online community members feel heard frequently or all of the time**
- **78% of online community members ask questions frequently or all of the time**
- **70% of online communities provide solutions frequently or all of the time don't lie.**

The Technical

Community building is at the heart of business. Why? Because it is ALL about relationships. Community not only empowers us as business owners, but it empowers our customers who form part of our brand communities. As such, brands seeking increased prosperity and soaring success need to start tapping into vibrant online communities and work towards promoting meaningful engagement from their customer base.

The benefits are substantial. Online communities have the power to make users feel seen, feel cared for, ask questions, and find solutions. And community helps us as business owners to learn from our peers and learn more about the customers we seek to serve.

The Locations

You can build online and you can build in real life (and you should) – no matter if your business resides on the World Wide Web or the corner of Main Street. If the last year solidified anything, its strength lies in your ability to adjust and pivot when necessary. That flexibility comes in expanded connections.

Online Community

Put in simple terms, an online community is just a group of internet users that share information about a common interest. In the context of an online business or website, an online community is a place where your customers can share knowledge, seek help, ask questions, and interact with your brand. It's simple and easy for members to join and connect with other users. In the best-case scenario, your community members might even end up becoming advocates or superfans.

Anywhere there is an online platform, there is an opportunity to build community. You have to find the places where your target market hangs out and join them there – either in an existing group or in one you organize.

Make time to be invested in connecting and helping in your group on a consistent basis.

Examples of Online Community:

- **Twitter Chat**
- **Facebook Group**
- **Zoom Meetups**
- **Slack**
- **Discord**

Examples of In-Person Community

- Rotary Club (or other community groups)
- Local Chambers
- Meetups
- Conferences and Seminars
- Courses

In-Person Community

If the online connections opportunities are wide, the in-person ones are limitless.

Anywhere your target connects is an opportunity to grow connections. Use the local announcements in your newspaper (yes, you can still get newspapers) for community groups. The WordPress dashboard provides announcements of WordPress groups meeting up around the globe. If you look, you'll find plenty off opportunities to meet and connect with others.

The only limits to your connections are the limits you set. Remember to maintain your balance and keep your focus on learning, growing, and sharing.

Your Focus

When it comes to building connections, there are two pillars you want to stack. One has to do with your target market. The other has to do with your continued growth (as a person and in business).

Target Market. You want to hang out where you will connect and engage with your target market. When you wrote out your business plan (because you did that already, right?), you included a detailed description of your target market or ideal customer. To meet up with your target market you'll have to attend groups where he/she hangs out. You aren't likely to sell gardening tools to a group of carpenters.

.Business Growth. If you are determined to build success for your business then you have to be invested in continued growth. Attending business oriented meet ups can help you connect with others outside of your industry who may serve as collaborators or mentors. Look for groups that will feed your growth and possibility thinking.

There are tons of platforms online perfect for community building. That could be a designated portal on your company website, a secondary website, a social media group or hashtag, online forums, community emails, or even your company blog's comments section. The possibilities are massive. The only criteria is engagement and interaction. The more engagement you can facilitate the more relationships you will grow.

**The more engagement
you can facilitate
the more relationships
you will grow.**

Power of Community

By now we know that online communities drive customer engagement. But what does that translate to in practical, actionable terms? By harnessing engagement, community building has the power to help us understand our customers better, help us improve outcomes for our customers, and give brand awareness and loyalty a serious boost. With a thriving community, you should start noticing a lot of positive changes. Community increases brand visibility, improves customer outcomes, and drives loyalty. Besides, it's just more fun this way.

Community building is the perfect environment for networking your brand. Think of it as an online word-of-mouth forum. Here customers can discover your brand, learn about what you do, and recommend you to other new customers.

Community drives referrals and referrals drive discovery. Did you know that 88% of customers agree that word-of-mouth recommendations from people they know are the most trustworthy? Customers trust user-generated content.

So providing a platform for authentic reviews and comments is one of the best things you can do to support business growth. By facilitating discussion, we empower our customers to support each other and share advice. And by keeping our customers actively engaged in this manner, we allow brand loyalty to thrive like never before.

The benefits of community building



- Create fast and easy connection with new and existing customers
- Provide a direct line to customer self-service options
- Increase social media presence and referrals
- Find our top-tier customers and brand advocates
- Ask customers for feedback and ideas to improve your business
- Take the opportunity to cross-sell, up-sell, and add value

Mastermind Communities

Professional communities allow business owners to share their experiences, tips, and advice with other business owners. Joining an online business community can be hugely beneficial for the success of your online business – especially if you're just starting out. These communities are havens of informative content, likeminded individuals, and professional experience to tap into.

Mastermind groups are an increasingly popular type of business community. A mastermind group is specifically designed as a resource to help business owners mine the collective intelligence of others. Usually a group of people from a similar field meet periodically to discuss and tackle problems collectively. In other words, a mastermind group is just a supportive forum where peer-to-peer advice can be shared. The best groups are comprised of **mutual beneficiaries**. That means all members of your mastermind group should be in a position to give and take advice.

Benefits include:

- Troubleshoot business problems with trusted and knowledgeable advisors
- Seek and give help to other business owners and collaborate on projects
- Boost your networking and get to know other leaders in your industry
- Learn something new and find unique solutions to business problems
- Benefit from the innovation that comes with collective thinking
- Enjoy being part of an exclusive community of likeminded individuals

CHALLENGE: You will grow the qualities of the five people you are most around. What qualities will you grow?

Customer communities

Customer communities help businesses increase engagement amongst their customers and help customers interact with one another in one place. Customer communities can take many different forms. Some communities choose to focus on social networking, others are designated customer support centers. Let's take a closer look at five of the most effective customer community types.

Social communities - those based on social media platforms. You can use these platforms to market new products and initiatives. Customers can then interact in the comments sections, chat functions, and engage with brand hashtags and campaigns. Social communities increase brand awareness, broadcast marketing materials, and help generate wider audiences for a particular online business or website.

Support communities - places where customers can help troubleshoot each other's technical problems. Customers share tips and recommendations with one another and in turn, this drives engagement and brand loyalty for the future. You'll create an atmosphere where your customers are supported while reducing overhead costs.

Advocacy communities - places where brands can incentivize loyal customers to increase loyalty and spread awareness. Here members are rewarded for their promotional efforts. For example, if they write a testimonial or review on social media, or invite a friend that joins.

Did you know that 67% of customers today actually prefer self-service over speaking to a company representative for support?

Made to Thrive:

- **Treat everyone unique**
- **Encourage engagement**
- **Support sharing**
- **Facilitate respect**
- **Let community lead**

Support Your Community

Online community building is great news for business. Perhaps you've already set up an online community of your own or you're thinking of doing so very soon. If you've been wondering how to develop a community that really thrives, then listen up. We're going to share with you our tips and tricks for a successful and fruitful online business community.

1. Treat everyone unique (because they are)

We can't expect every one of our customers to become brand advocates. User engagement can be incentivized with recognition and rewards, but member activity will vary. That's okay. Even a single comment or recommendation can have an impact.

2. Encourage engagement

A customer portal is just that. A place for your customers to speak freely about your products and services. Encourage openness by providing plenty of content creation opportunities in comments sections, social media groups, and forums.

3. Support sharing

Allow your users to educate each other about your products. When a community can solve problems for one another and issue referrals, that's essentially passive customer support and marketing for you and your brand. It's a win-win scenario.

4. Facilitate respect

This is a super important one. Depending on the nature of your business or website, there may be instances when sensitive topics are discussed in your online communities. It's essential that your users agree to adopt a culture of respect. Set clear boundaries for your users and moderate content.

5. Let community lead

It can be tempting to try and take control of everything that goes on in your online community, but it's important that, as brands, we do not interfere too much. Truly authentic customer expression comes from customer-to-customer interactions, so let them do their thing and allow the community to influence your business on your behalf sometimes.

Start Now

Community building is one of the best things you can do for your online business or website in 2021. Providing a space where your customers can exchange knowledge, reviews, tips, and advice is invaluable. Plus it takes some work off your busy shoulders at the same time.

Community building is a two-way street. As business owners we need to seek community for ourselves and for our customers. So, if you haven't already, it's time to join your very own mastermind group, and set up a killer customer community platform for your business. You'll be sure to start reaping those rewards in no time at all.

If you never start building, your community will never happen. And if you want to see your business prosper begin with the people (because that's what it's all about).



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Do well.

Do better.

Flourish.

Thrive.

Be successful.

Go places.

Take the next step.

Blossom and bloom.

Be Happier.

Make money.

Save time.

Save energy.

Protect your work.

Build your skills.

Be more effective.

Work less.

Work with better people.

Live the life of your dreams.

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