The State of Community Management
2020

Professional Communities Unleash Potential

THE COMMUNITY
ROUNDTABLE

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Create more satisfied customers and members with Higher Logic's engagement platform

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$115 → $697 $127 → $822

...ORTIVE & ADAPTIVE STRUCTURES...

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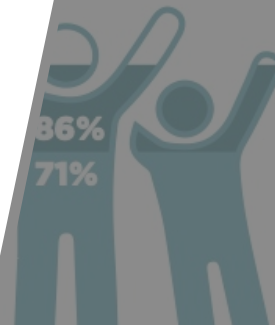
56% More Resources

71% HR-Approved Roles

...THAT ORCHESTRATE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & LOYALTY.

...gly Positive ...nd Sentiment:

Members Feel Empowered:

FEEL SEEN:
59%
73%

PROVIDE SOLUTIONS:
72%
81%

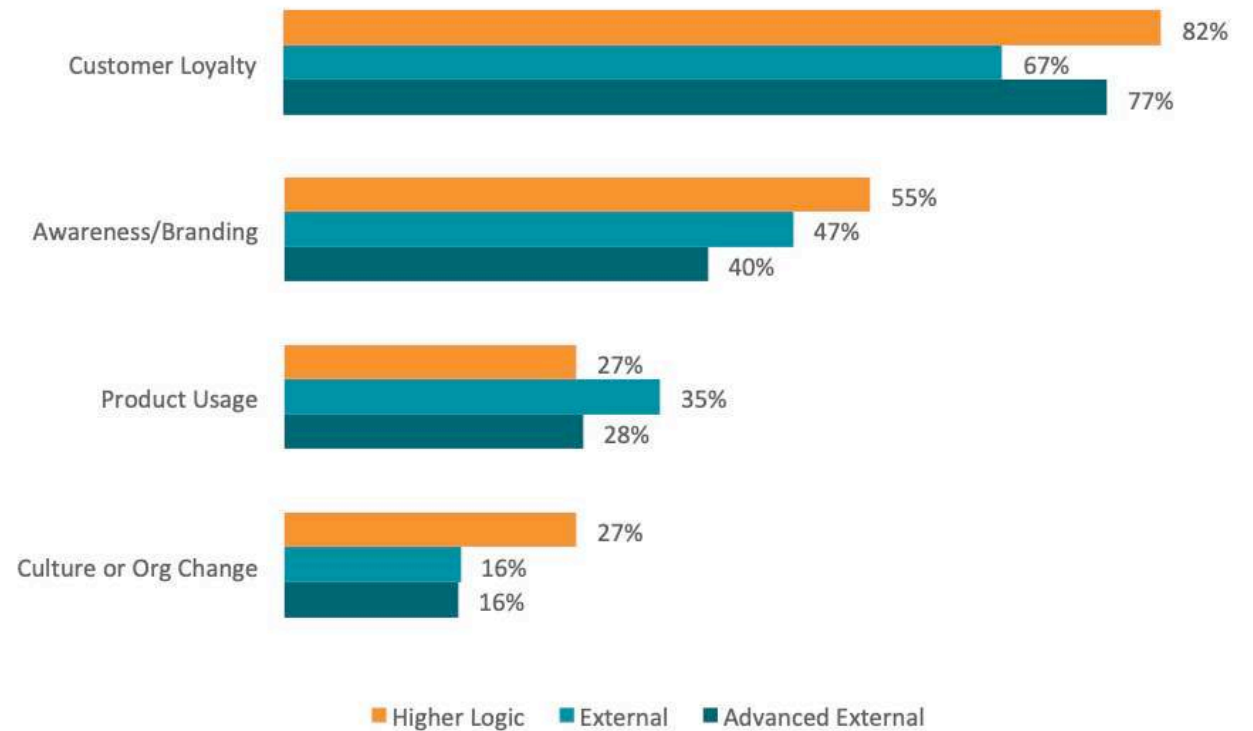Resulting in **20%** More Active Members.

86%
71%

DEEPEN RELEVANCE BY DELIVERING VALUE

External customer and member communities have a unique ability to streamline the customer experience. Because of their ability to aggregate and connect information, they not only serve as a means of support but also provide an opportunity to regularly interact with customers in a way not possible through other channels.

Higher Logic's customer's communities deliver complex business objectives; contributing to increasing customer loyalty and brand awareness, extending product/service use, and supporting culture change. As more organizational engagement moves online this suggests communities serve as organizational hubs that cross time and geography.

Business Outcomes Connected Directly to Communities

	Higher Logic	External	Advanced External
Customer Loyalty	82%	67%	77%
Awareness/Branding	55%	47%	40%
Product Usage	27%	35%	28%
Culture or Org Change	27%	16%	16%

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imperva

Name: Chris Detzel

Title: Global Community Manager (Former), Imperva

Use Case: Customer Support

Industry: Security/Technology

"We know when customers engage with us this way, they get excited about all the ways Imperva can help them - going deeper within the products and buying more."

Imperva is a cyber security software and services company, offering 18 different products designed to help 6200 companies from eBay to Coca-Cola to VW and Sony. They launched their community in 2019 to connect their customers with each other and with product experts at Imperva. In their first year, they've focused on driving community engagement as the key to achieving their customer retention, upsell/cross-sell, and case deflection goals. Their lean team of one has developed efficient community engagement tactics to increase customer engagement.

Imperva's Global Community Manager, Chris Detzel, created a community webinar program covering product roadmaps, expert interviews, Ask Me Anything-style sessions, and new product launches. He's used Higher Logic to automate the registration and follow-up process. Once the webinar is over, Chris creates even more opportunities for engagement by turning webinars into digestible videos, discussion threads, product Q&As, and product blogs. With each event, the company gets a new wealth of content and SEO opportunities that increase their reach and create value for their community.

By creating exciting and engaging community programming, Imperva is increasing high-value customer engagement that they're already seeing lead to renewals and upsells.

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ENGAGEMENT TO DRIVE RESULTS

Our Community Engagement Framework™ helps us understand how to create and move a community culture from sharing to solving - including suggested metrics to track behaviors.

Each of these engagement behaviors has a different value.

A healthy community has this entire range of behaviors, although percentages differ depending on community purpose.

Download the Framework

Community Engagement Framework™
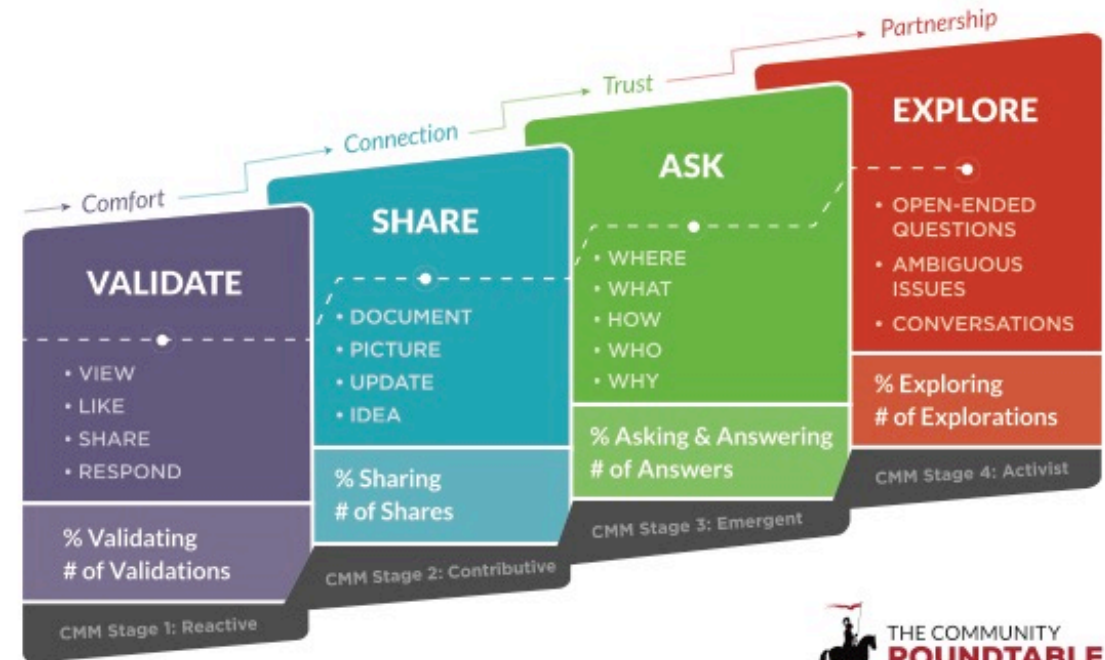
THE VALUE OF ENGAGEMENT

Using the Community Engagement Framework™ you can identify your current engagement, and then determine what behaviors to encourage to achieve your specific community goals.

Expected Behavior	Community Value
Validate: view, react, bookmark, tag, or repost	Empowers members so they feel seen, heard, and valued
Share: original perspectives, examples, pictures, or files	Empowers members to connect and build relationships
Ask: prompts contribution of expertise	Captures and makes expertise transparent & accessible
Explore: dialog, brainstorming, and discussions	Generates ideas, creativity, and innovation

Community Engagement Framework™
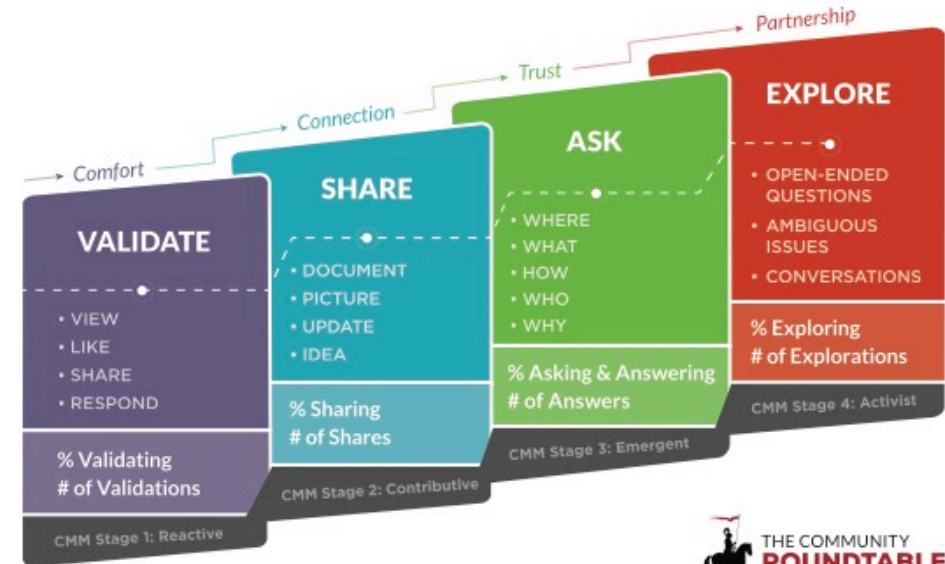
Communities

PROVIDE

Significant ROI

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PROVIDE SOLUTIONS: 72%   81%

Resulting in 20% More Active Members.

86%
71%

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY

ROI is one metric that speaks to even the biggest community skeptics. How can anyone argue with a 3,739% return on investment?

Higher Logic communities report this impressive ROI based on the value of answers provided to their members.

Using our industry-standard ROI calculation, we can see that the communities surveyed provide immense value to their organizations. And, numbers like these help community program owners secure additional resources to help their communities grow, and in turn, provide even greater value.

Community Return on Investment
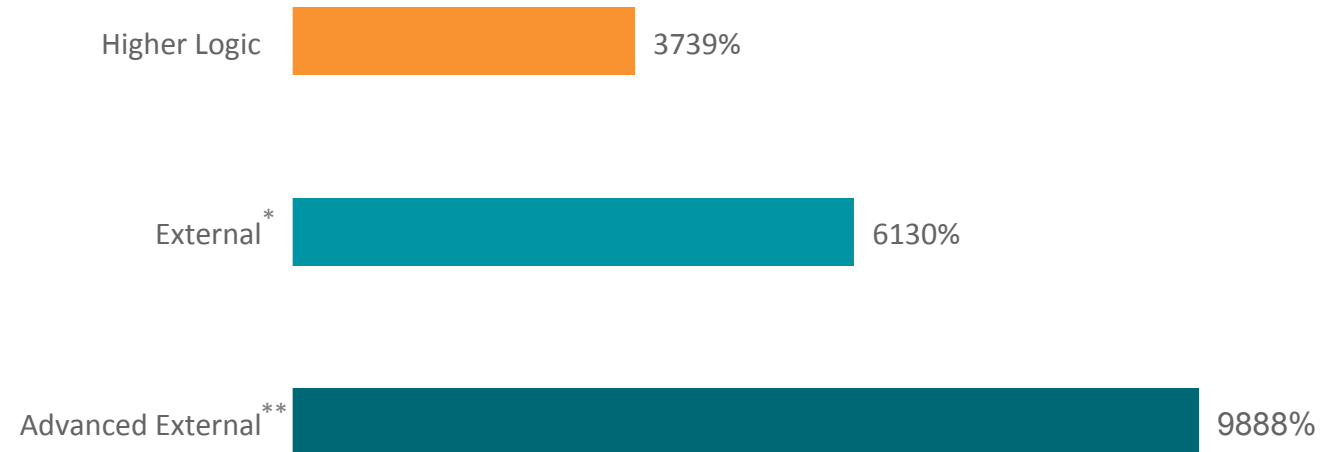
Higher Logic	3739%
External*	6130%
Advanced External**	9888%

* External Communities – the research segment representing customer-facing communities
**Advanced External Communities – the research segment with 100% approved, operational, and measurable strategies

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HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR COMMUNITY ROI

Community professionals are often hesitant to calculate the ROI of their program, but we encourage you to use this simple ROI formula to understand how your community contributes to the overall success of your organization.

To calculate the ROI of your community program you need just five data points:

1. Number of answers provided in your community program annually

2. Number of searches in your community program annually

3. Estimate of % of successful searches (we suggest you start with 20%)

4. Financial value of an answered question (see page 13 for advice on determining this value)

5. Cost of your community program annually (include platform, staff, content, etc.)

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR COMMUNITY ROI

Value of Answers Calculation

1. Value of Answers:
x = # of Answers * Value of an Answer

2. Networked Value of Answers:
y = (# of Searches * % Successful) * Value of Answer

Community Program ROI:

$$\frac{(x+y) - \text{Program Cost}}{\text{Program Cost}} = \%\ ROI$$

BEST PRACTICES FOR CALCULATING COMMUNITY ROI

Before you dive in... keep in mind a few key points:

1. ROI is a best estimate -- not an answer.

You cannot possibly calculate all value, so this exercise is about establishing confidence -- not about getting things perfect.

2. Be conservative.

Make the numbers you put into the equation ones you can easily defend and are reasonable to stakeholders. Enlist a cross-functional team to help determine the value of an answer for your organization. This value is highly dependent on the use case and behaviors you expect in your community.

3. Show and tell.

Make sure you collect the stories behind the numbers. By illustrating the types of questions answered, you make the numbers a human story, not just data.

4. Don't reinvent the wheel.

Capturing the average value of an answer is at the heart of making this formula work, and often, community managers aren't sure where to start. Don't be afraid to ask your customer support, IT help desk, or HR help desk for their estimate for the value of an answer, or seek out an industry average or other benchmark that you can apply.

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COMMUNITY IS POSITIVELY POWERFUL

Counter to many assumptions (think trolls and flame wars…), communities are overwhelmingly positive contributors to overall brand resonance and value. Of course, all communities can face difficult conversations and unhappy members – the most trusted communities make room for that – but that on the whole, the transparency and value provided by the community contribute to positive brand sentiment.

Communities Generate Overwhelmingly Positive Brand Sentiment

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Higher Logic						
External						
Advanced External						

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Significantly Positive
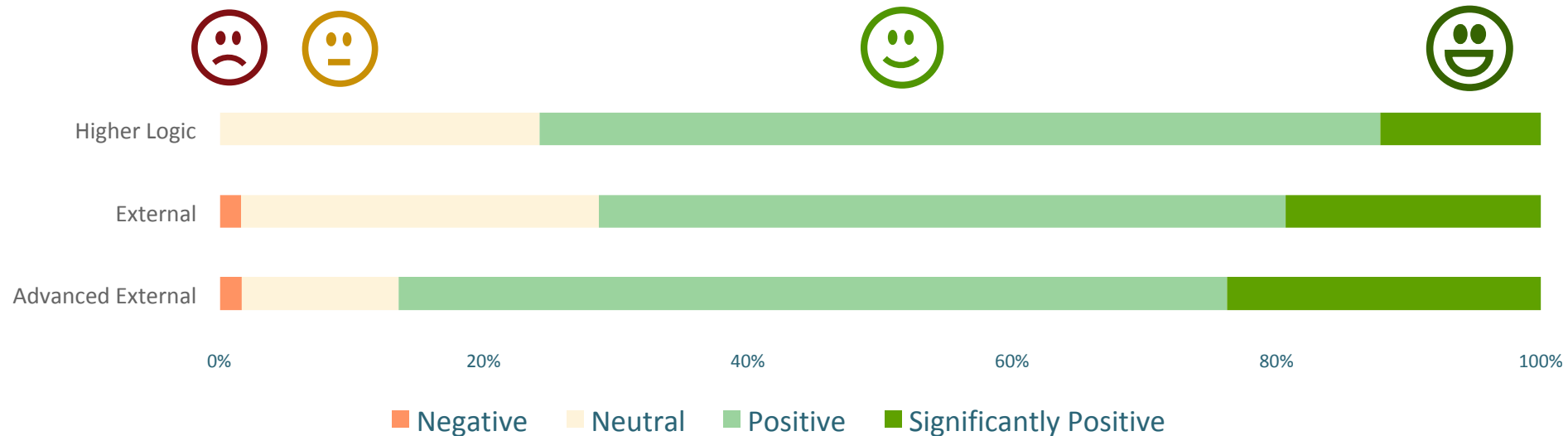
COMMUNITIES POWER AGILITY

ASCE
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

Name: Tirza Austin

Title: Online Community Management
Membership Support. ASCE

Use Case: Member Support

Industry: Association/NFP

"Online communities have never been more important. "

The American Society of Civil Engineers — representing the civil engineering profession with more than 600 different committees — knew their thriving online community was a place to connect with one another. But with COVID-19 cancelling every in-person event, the team needed a way to build engagement and support their members, fast.

Their new motto? "Be fast. Be first."

It was easy for their team to quickly pivot to digital first, running event registrations, automated email campaigns, and gathering feedback through their existing community. Plus, they didn't let fear of not doing things right get in the way of moving quickly to support members. In Tirza's words, "We decided that if SNL and Jimmy Fallon could use home videos and Zoom to make content, so could we. It's not the video quality you would have expected a year ago, but it's relevant, and people care about authenticity."

COVID-19 YoY Engagement Impact

- **57%** more users, representing engagement from more than 54,000 additional individuals
- **47%** more sessions, representing 88,000 additional visits

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PERFECTION IS THE ENEMY OF ENGAGEMENT

We are firm believers that perfection is the enemy of engagement.

How do you react when you receive a perfectly crafted report? Hear an adamant and decisive opinion from an expert? Read Ikea instructions? Watch a TV show?

Do you jump in and edit it or immediately mash it up into something different? Unless you are unusual you accept or reject it, but you probably don't engage deeply with it and make it your own. It's not structured for interaction. The subtext is that the work is done, the messiness has been cleaned up and it has been delivered to you in a perfect state. It is a product, not a discussion – take it or leave it.

This is at odds with the true power of community – engaging with your members.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given organizations an opportunity to use their community programs to interact and engage in ways that might have been possible before, but were often overlooked or dismissed. Now is a great time to review what functionality and features your community platform offers, and see how you can leverage unused offerings to drive engagement and get even more value out of your community program by connecting in fresh ways.
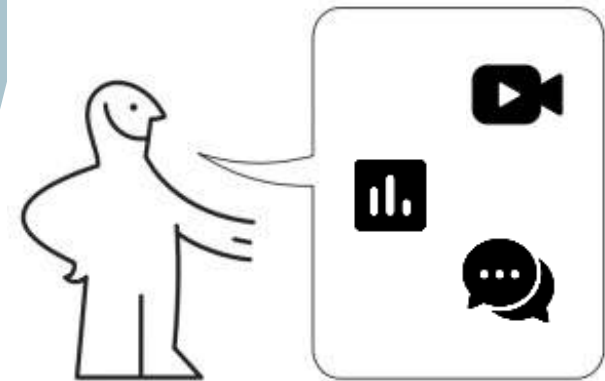
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Find new ways to help your community fit into your organization's success.

In order to leverage the overwhelmingly positive benefits, community program owners need to think strategically about how and where their programs fit into the overall organization. Use these three ideas below to increase the visibility and impact of your community programs.

Quick Start Checklist

❏ **Identify gaps.** Make a list of all the departments you already actively solicit content, ideas, and SME help from. Who *isn't* on that list? Reach out to colleagues in those departments to get them involved with fresh content and new programming ideas.

❏ **Work cross-functionally.** Ask peers in marketing, IT, support, and others for their biggest customer-related challenges. Use your community program to help solve for these pain points in new ways.

❏ **Consider the journey.** Map your current customer journey. How can you create opportunities for your customers to use the community to enhance their journey and provide unexpected value?

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RECOMMENDATION #2: EXPLORE NEW IDEAS

"But, this is the way we've always done it…" is a non-starter in a post-COVID-19 world.

Organizations are quickly realizing that to thrive in this new landscape they need to connect with their customers in new, meaningful ways, or get left behind. Use the ideas below to think about the potential of your community in new ways.

Quick Start Checklist

❑ **Revisit the no pile.** Do you have a list of programming ideas that didn't make the cut? Pull it out of the trash (metaphorically!) and think about them again, with the phrase "it doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be" in mind.

❑ **Do a little friendly reconnaissance.** Your community platform probably has a customer community (like Higher Logic's HUG!). Poke around and see how others with different use cases are using their online community. We can almost guarantee that you'll get ideas for fresh ways to think about customer engagement and programming.

❑ **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** If you're really stuck don't be afraid to ask. Leverage your community platform success manager to learn about what parts of the technology you aren't using – but should be. There may be some quick community wins that you don't even know about!

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RECOMMENDATION #3: SHOW YOUR WORK

Our number one piece of advice? Toot your own horn.

It's a tough cycle – communities with funded roadmaps are better able to prove their value, and community programs that can provide their value are more easily able to secure additional resources. So, how to get started? Just start.

Quick Start Checklist

❑ **Calculate your community ROI.** Even if you've never done it before, and even if you aren't 100% sure of your numbers, use our ROI calculator to figure out a rough estimate to see where you are. Then fine-tune it with help from others in your organization.

❑ **Find the metrics that matter.** What's important to your organization? Case deflection? NPS scores? Engagement numbers? Find out what matters and report on how your community program contributes to those metrics.

❑ **Don't get discouraged.** It's important to keep in mind the way community engagement grows and develops. The scalability of answers in a community environment is a major reason why communities tend to start slowly and accelerate in value over time. Members need to build trust and adopt desired behaviors, and the community itself must build its library of answers and useful information. Celebrate the little wins along the way.

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ABOUT THIS eBOOK

This eBook is based on the 2020 State of Community Management research, produced by The Community Roundtable. This eBook is sponsored by and made possible with support from Higher Logic. It compares the results of three data segments:

- Average External Communities - the research segment representing customer-facing communities

- Advanced External Communities - the research segment with 100% approved, operational, and measurable strategies

- Higher Logic Communities – the research segment representing communities powered by Higher Logic

This eBook considers Higher Logic customer communities in three areas:

- Brand and Organizational Relevance

- Importance of Communicating Value

- Generating Positive Sentiment

The complete report can be found at: https://the.cr/socm2020

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

We collaborate with global community, collaboration, and change management professionals clients to implement research-backed, tactical strategies for better online community programs.

Clients rely on our models, research, expertise, and peer networks to build and manage successful communities.

Research

Frameworks, Benchmarks, and Community ROI Models

THECR NETWORK

Community of Practice

TheCR Library
TRUSTED COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Content Subscription

THECR ACADEMY

Training & Events

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