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## TRANSCRIPT

# Community Conversations - #84 – Jillian Bejtlich

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

zapier, community, people, question, kpis, triage, award, amazing, support, tiramisu, run, answer, team, find, community roundtable, work, incited, conversations, replies, api

### SPEAKERS

Jim Storer, Jillian Bejtlich, Shannon Abram

#### **Jim Storer** 00:07

Hello, and welcome to another community conversations podcast. My name is Jim storer. I'm a founder of the Community Roundtable and I'm here with my capable co host Shannon Abram. That's

#### **Shannon Abram** 00:18

me. Hi. We are excited to bring another episode of community conversations to you. We have a very exciting guest. She works at a company you've probably heard of that's amazing. She also used to work with the community roundtable. And she's just a really delightful super smart human. Hi, Jillian.

#### **Jillian Bejtlich** 00:40

Hi. I don't know how to follow that up. But yes, hello, everyone. I am Julian bellick. I am Director of Community docs and education at Zapier and saying that I'm just gonna tell everyone, while people say how do you remember to say the name of the company because everyone comes and says, Oh, it's Zapier. Zap, EA Zapier makes you happier. Just that is the way to remember it. You'll never say it wrong again.

#### **Shannon Abram** 01:07

I'm glad you said that, because I tooting my own horn have always said it correctly. And I think I when you told me once that people say it other ways. I was like, that sounds insane. And then you told me that fun mnemonic to remember it. And I think about it all the time. That's going to ask you to say that but then you said it. Can you tell us in case someone doesn't know what Zapier is, although hold on to your bots, because you should know what it is. And it's awesome. What does that be? Or do and what kind of community do you have?

01:36

Yeah, of course. So Zapier is a really cool tool in that everything we do on the internet with all the various SaaS applications out there. They're run by API's. Everything behind the scenes is an API. And what an API is, basically is a little bits of data. These are things like email addresses, IDs, phone numbers, images, metadata, etc. All these pieces of data are flying around behind the scenes, big databases. But the problem is a lot of times that API definition gets stuck in one tool in really, really, really badly wanted and another tool. So for instance, I'll give you a real example of one that I use. I have, all of my calendar stuff is a Google Calendar, which is great. It's exciting. It's beautiful, who doesn't love it. But all of my task management is in Asana. And so I need to find a way to get these two databases to see each other and facilitate my work without me literally sitting there copying, pasting and duplicating my tasks in Asana. So by using Zapier, I'm able to build an automation so that every time I have a new calendar, then it shoots it over to Asana as a new task. And that's just to have 5000 applications that Zapier currently works with. And that's a very, very minor example. We have people that automate their entire businesses, their entire shops, we have some really, really amazing, gigantic, amazing corporations that use it to facilitate all sorts of types of things. Really, really cool company. I can't get over the use cases that we see. And in my situation, I run a support community. And that means that I get to see all of these use cases come through Zapier community, where people are asking us questions about how to create things, how to, you know, set up the right automations the right integrations, we get asked a lot of questions about tool stacks, looking for inspiration, ways to automate their business, or people just coming in and sharing really, really incredible use cases, stories of how Zack yours actually made their businesses more efficient, or save them time and resources.

**Jim Storer** 03:45

Wow, I know that you've got a lot of experience in support communities. And it's not surprising, but we saw on the interwebs that took home an industry award recently for outstanding community. Can you tell us? Well, I guess first of all, congratulations. And could she could you tell us a little bit more about the award? And what prompted you guys to submit and why you think you took it home?

04:10

Yeah, for sure. First off, thank you. Yeah, it was it was really, really exciting to actually get that award. And Fun little fact was that we actually didn't submit for the award. We got contacted by Gainsight, several weeks ago, and they said, Hey, congratulations, you've won an award. And we actually need your logo and some other information from you, which was wild. Because normally in this in this world, you have to apply for awards. And come to find out we had basically been nominated internally by incited and Gainsight staff for having the best insight of community for 2022 which is wild. I don't think I've ever won an award without applying for it. So this this was very much a first for me.

**Jim Storer** 04:55

Can you tell us a little bit more about what they saw and what what it was that got you the award?

05:02

Yeah, for sure. As far as I understand what they saw, and you know, kind of based on conversations we've had with them, Zapier community is pretty unique in first off how fast we became a pretty significant support community. I've been working for communities for a long time, it takes a long time to

really get momentum and get to the point where you're causing significant deflection in the company, we have had our community up and running for less than three years. It's happened in place, it's a very, very happenin place. We have amazing metrics. For instance, 85%, of all of the questions we get receive or first reply with an ad, within 18 hours, more than half of our questions, get an answer within, you know, a very, very short time span. And I think inside it sees all of this, we're also generally always challenging them to create a better product. And those conversations they always tell us are some of the most advanced conversations they have. And that, you know, we're really pushing the bounds of support communities. And also, it's just a really, really constructive, welcoming and approachable place. We actually hear all the time from other community managers at other companies will reach out to us and say, Hey, how did you build that community? What platform are you on? Tell us about your strategy, how come you don't have a lot of, you know, hostility or negativity, a lot of great questions like that. So it's pretty cool to see that all the work that we've done, is getting noticed by our vendor, by our peers, and now by the industry in general.

### **Shannon Abram** 06:32

So I just got so excited Hearing you say that, because we hear stories about platform vendors that aren't excited to hear from their clients, which sounds sort of crazy when you say it out loud. But who better to help you improve your product and the people who are using it, right. And so it makes me really excited about Gainsight as a company, that they welcome the challenge and that they value what you're doing, because it's so so valuable. It just, it's always crazy to me, when people are like, Oh, well, like, my vendor kind of makes me jump through hoops to provide feedback, or, you know, I sent all these things, and they never replied, and it's like, no, these are the people using it, you can listen to them. And so that's me, as a person who is sort of on the outside of all that it makes me really excited to hear that they are embracing you as a person and your feedback as an organization.

07:32

Yeah, definitely. And it is unusual. You both know, because you've worked with me in the past, you know, I've worked with a lot of vendors, and I've jumped through all those hoops. And it's interesting, because I will say inside it is super, super onboard with getting all of this information. And it's funny, because I'm curious to see where they go as a vendor, they've been really, really receptive to feedback. In fact, it's really funny how often they'll be like, Oh, hey, do you mind talking to this person, you know, either at incited or in Gainsight. I've given them your perspective on XYZ. And that's, that's really cool. Like, that's really, really cool that they actually do that. My hope at this point is, though, is that, you know, I want to see them continue to grow as a vendor, which, you know, I know they're gonna hear this, you're not gonna be surprised to hear that. But I'm really curious to see of all the feedback that we give them. What do they do? And can they become a much, much, much cooler and better platform than they already are? I love it. I

### **Shannon Abram** 08:32

love hearing it. So you'd said that. It's a support community. It's a community primarily for your users. And so for anyone listening who is either getting started in support communities or dabbling in the idea of using community for support, what are some of your primary community initiatives that you use to support Zapier users?

08:53

Yeah, some of the big things that we do first off, like any support community, one of our primary initiatives is around community moderation and engagement. Instead of making this just a day to day thing, you know, something that happens, we've actually made it its own separate initiative. So this means that we resource it as an initiative. We strategize it as an initiative, and it really helps us make sure that we're always pushing the boundaries and doing better and so you know, example around this, we were starting to notice that it was getting really hard to moderate and to make sure that we were doing a good job around follow up. So one of my employees, Jesse, they created this amazing triage system, which uses Zapier, by the way, it pushes things from incited into air table. And from there, it uses this algorithm which basically helps us figure out what needs to be addressed first, and where we can kind of buy ourselves a little bit of time. So that's been pretty exciting. Other big initiatives is really using data to drive our actions. So for instance, we do a lot of looking at our analytics almost every single day in some cases every single week to figure out how to build the right proactive and reactive content. So our goal here is if we see a trend starting to come up, so it may not even be an incident, yet, it may not even be a thing, we notice it before everyone else, and we try to react to it, and get the documentation out there with really, really strong SEO, and make sure that we have the right knowledge at the right time in the right place. And I'm pretty excited to say this is working. This is definitely something I always want to do on the other communities I've worked with, really just didn't have a big enough team or enough data. But we're able to do it on this team. And it's working really, really well.

**Jim Storer** 10:36

You know, kind of a follow on to that. I'm wondering about the team that you do have, can you talk a little bit about the community team and how technical you are? Because it seems like probably a lot of the questions that come in, in this kind of support community might be beyond the scope of what a typical community manager might know about?

10:57

Yes, very much. So one of the things that we require on our team is that no matter what role you hold on the community team, you do go into the community, every single week, and you engage with customers. For some of us, this looks like you know, acknowledging great replies thanking people, some of us do try to jump into technical stuff. And this week I went in, and I answered a question, which I was very proud of myself for even trying to answer your question. And within 10 minutes, the customer came back and said that I had actually provided the right answer. And they marked my answer as the best answer. And I got very, very excited, which is funny as the director to get excited. But with that being said, yes, the way we have our team set up is that we have a bunch of different community tracks. And these are things like advocacy, content and operations. And then we also have a moderation team. So we have a moderation manager. And then under them, they have a few individuals, both part time and full time that work on answering questions in the community. And this kind of works out well, because it is a very, very, very technical product. There's no getting around that you also have to know how to navigate the internal documentation, and be able to figure out how to read API's and web hooks and code and all sorts of fun stuff like that. So by not requiring the entire team to be technical, you know, wizards, it allows some of us to really, really hone in on leveling up

community strategy, while other parts of the team are really, really focused on leveling up their technical knowledge, and providing better community engagement.

**Shannon Abram** 12:31

So I have two questions, to follow up questions. One is how many people are on your team?

12:36

I think right now we're at eight. I don't know why my brain can ever remember this number. But I'm pretty sure we're at eight people on community right now.

**Shannon Abram** 12:43

Well, for anyone listening, we are recording this on a Friday morning, so it's not Julian's fault. Follow up question number two, based off of that, we've been talking a lot about ways to sort of exactly what you're saying, Get the people who work with your community, whether or not they're actually on the community team at your organization? How do you get them involved in the community in productive ways? And so it's amazing. You all go in there every week? Do you have suggestions? Like, oh, you should try to go do these three things for different people? Or do they have sort of like KPIs set against you have to do this twice a month? Or? I'm not sure I'm asking a great question, but really

13:26

is how do we keep people like on task motivated and driving us towards those goals? Yep,

**Shannon Abram** 13:31

way better? Question.

13:33

We tried for a while doing the really, really strict API's. But the problem, and a lot of community professionals, I'm sure are listening to this. They're going oh, yeah, this is definitely a problem. You can have a question that comes into your community and in 15 seconds, you get out the best answer ever. You check it off, and you're done. Then there's the question that comes into your community and it takes you 15 hours to chase down the right answer, you have 25 back and forth. And by the time you're done, you're like, that should have been a two minute question. But it took you 15 hours, there's no good way to tell a community professional, hey, you got to get through this many things. So the way we've done this is a little bit different. First off, we have team KPIs, which in our situation is the percent of topics to get a first reply within 18 hours and a percent of topics to get an answer within the same calendar month. Those two metrics alone have really driven the team to say this is not just on one person, we all have some responsibility to this. We then add in our triage that I was mentioning, right my employee Jesse built and what that does is it lets us go in and see exactly what currently needs work in the community. And you when you look at that list, you go, oh gosh, if this list doesn't get smaller, pretty quick. This is going to be a problem. It's going to drag our our KPIs down to for instance, end of last week, beginning of this week. We came into some 61 thing is on triage, which is not good. We don't want 61 thing is on triage, we want like maybe 20. And so as a team, we all jumped into that triage, we looked for things that we were capable of working on. And we got that down to I think just over 25 something. And so that's worked out really, really well. On the moderation side of things. They

have a little bit stricter KPIs like they know what they're looking for, they know what the numbers are in specific forums. But we're definitely trying to not hold them to, you know, replies per day, replies per hour, we're just trying to hold them to those big overarching KPIs that they know that they can influence. So I've

**Jim Storer 15:36**

got a couple of questions that are, I think, related. Let's just see where we go with these. But the first question is, you know, in communities like this a technical support community, we've had a lot of conversations in the car network with members about engaging SMEs and kind of making sure that the organization is rallying around getting answers. And you started to talk about what some of your KPIs are, I just want you to talk a little bit about internal evangelizing, engaging SMEs and making sure that the organization is supporting getting answers to questions within the community.

16:10

So we're kind of have an interesting setup. Obviously, we do have internal subject matter experts, which is great. The irony here is that since we have 5000 applications that we work with, there is no one person or even a group of people inside of Zapier that holds enough knowledge to answer all of the questions that we receive. So the way that we handle this is through an escalation system. If something truly has our community team stumped, which by the way, does not happen very often, we will escalate it internally. So it will actually come out of the community, become a support ticket, and then start going through to the chain there. And what's really important here is a lot of companies, the semis tend to be in engineering, they tend to be in product. I mean, our company, our subject matter experts are very much our Customer Support department. They are incredible. They are by far the most knowledgeable, giving and just ridiculously cool people I've met at any company, so we tend to send a lot of things up their way. The other part to this is that Zapier has an expert's program. So this isn't a community program. It's actually a company program, that we work with individuals that basically run businesses to help people build automation into their businesses. And we send these people leads, we send them advance notice of tools that are coming out and things like that. And in return, these people come into the community, they come into our social media, and they help out. And so right now, we're actually building out a better program to actually get these experts into our triage system. And when we're really really stumped, we're going to be able to call them in and ask them for help. And the reason this is really unique and really important is that a lot of these experts hold subject matter expertise in very, very specific areas. So for instance, we have one person that I know we grabbed recently, as an expert, he is unbelievably knowledgeable at Klaviyo, and MailChimp. So he's going to be someone that we can actually send those specific questions to when everyone else is stumped. He's gonna be able to come to the community and help us out. So that's worked out pretty well. So far. We're pretty excited to build that out a bit more formally.

**Jim Storer 18:28**

That sounds amazing. It sounds like you've got buy in across the organization. So just a quick follow up that's kind of related is community really the first place your customers typically go to get answers to their questions. So

18:40

we've been trying to figure this out, actually, and we're suspecting the answer is mostly Yes. To typical behavior. Here. Again, Zapier is a little bit unique when you have 5000 applications. And people don't always know that Zapier said the answer, you see some really, really interesting boot behavior patterns, what we tend to see is that someone goes to Google, Bing, whatever their preferred search engine is, and they type in the name of two applications and then say, integrate, sync, workflow, whatever, some some word like that. And then in the Google results, they find the zapier.com website, they find the community, they find things from our experts. And that's how they come into our ecosystem. Once they're still a customer. We're still seeing this behavior. Like we look at how people come into our ecosystem, it's very much to those third party searches. And more often than not, if you type in some string of something, within other words, how do I problem question, whatever it is, community is almost always in the top 10 When you start getting into those types of searches. So we know that a lot of people do hit the community first. We do know that some of them bounce back out and do submit support tickets, but we do know that a lot of people hit the community to find what they're looking for and do you successfully go finish the job that that they started and they don't submit a support ticket. And we're doing a lot of work right now to actually see if we can build that even more, we want to get to the point where people hit self serve resources. And they are so good with what they found that they just go right back into their work. And they don't even need to ask a question.

### **Jim Storer** 20:20

This is bringing me back Chilean to work that you and I did together a long time ago in a prior life. But I just want to emphasize for everyone listening, one of the really important points of support communities is generating answers that then are populated in organic search results. So it can really be an incredible resource for customers, but also for the organization and just encourage organizations not to forget about how important community results are to those organic search results.

### 20:55

Yeah, absolutely. And that's something that we, as a team, like we really, really lean into that, like we always tell people, yeah, it may not have a lot of traction now. But because it's out there, it's probably going to save us something. And I mean, just to kind of give you like a really, really quick statistic here. I've actually run through these numbers, best answers. So these are things that are marked with solutions on our community, on average, get 234 views. That doesn't mean that 234 people, you know, have their questions answered, that means some percentage of 234 people didn't go and submit a ticket. So even if we were to say, 10% of that 20% of that, that's still a pretty decent

### **Shannon Abram** 21:38

chunk of people. That's amazing. So being able to look at that and track that and then sort of work backwards into the ROI you're providing is incredible. Like, it's just, it's amazing. Yep.

### 21:50

As you say, just yeah, we are trying to figure out our ROI. Right now, there are a lot of variables that we have to figure out. But I can say that based off of what I've seen so far, I want to keep it confidential. The numbers are so so good. Like I am so excited about them. I'm hoping next year to you know, actually apply for the community ROI award from CR. So you all know about?

**Shannon Abram 22:14**

Well, I love it. I love to hear it. So I was going to say I use that beer. We use it at the Community Roundtable. This is not a sponsored Zapier podcast, just to be clear, but we use it and I think it's a wonderful tool. I am not a technical person. My technical training is googling things. And so for me, Zapier is so easy to use to do things I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. I don't know if I'm a typical persona using your product or an outlier. But I know a lot of your users are really technical, right?

22:45

No, I'd actually say a lot of our users are like you there are individuals who have something they're trying to do something that is incredibly redundant. And they want to find a better way of doing it. And they know that there's got to be a better way of doing it. And so they go to Google, they type in the thing that they want to do. They find Zapier and Zapier is very much a What You See Is What You Get type of tool, you literally are dragging and dropping, and selecting fields. And then you hit publish and magic happens. I mean, that's that's basically what it feels like. And it's interesting, because actually, when we look at the automation space, one of the things that I've been way too excited about is that, in general, the automation, no code space, kind of is a very, very cool and edgy group of people. And more often than not, I hear from people who do not consider themselves cool and edgy. And they're like, oh, I don't know if I can automate. I don't know if I can do no code. You know, I'm just not that type of person. But they can. I mean, like I had some amazing conversations with nonprofits and teachers and small business owners, just people that honestly like I had one guy who was like he was I barely know how to use my cell phone. He's like, but I use Zapier, that is who we're trying to help like, that is the purpose of my community, the use cases that we work on, is to help people like that.

**Shannon Abram 24:07**

Truly, if that man isn't in an ad, like on the side of a bus or something he should be because that's a fantastic testimonial. And it's encouraging because I do think there's just so much stuff that I'm like, I won't be able to figure this out. And then it's like, oh, it was really easy. And the best thing about it is it tells you it's like a wizard it tells you when you're doing things wrong, and then it helps you and it's amazing. So we love Zapier. That's the That's the moral of the podcast. Julian, we didn't prepare you for this at the end of our podcast, we like to do a speed round.

24:37

I've worked with you in the past so I'm accustomed to like these weird speed rounds. So

**Shannon Abram 24:41**

I feel very confident. I know the answer the first question, but we have to ask it anyway. Are you Team Cat or are you Team dog?

24:50

Oh T dog. Come on. I have a nine and a half year old Malamute named kina. We just recently added a 10 week old husky puppy to the family His name is Newt. He's named after Sir Isaac Newton.

**Jim Storer 25:05**

Well, I hope you're able to keep Nuit from running. I know that Huskies love to run. So they do. Yes, we had a good friend who would always lose their Husky he would just take off and they'd get a telephone call from someone two towns over who had found their Husky in their backyard. So be prepared for the running away. Now, another question we'd love to ask is what are you bingeing these days?

25:30

What about bingeing? I really okay. Digital is two things. I really like historical fiction. I don't know why I hated history as a kid growing up hated history class when nothing to do with that. Now as a grown up, I love reading historical fiction books, and I love watching historical fiction shows. So definitely been bingeing that couldn't even tell you the name of any of the shows I've been watching. But I will tell you any book by Kate Quinn, that's in her historical fiction line is perfection, especially the Huntress. That needs to be a movie that needs to be a series. I just need someone to make that happen.

**Shannon Abram** 26:08

I hope someone on Netflix is listening. Next question. You have worked from home for a long time. What is your favorite work from home hack? What keeps you productive?

26:18

What's a good question? You know, honestly, I think it is when you start hitting a wall, get off and don't do work for a moment. I think too many people when they say Oh, I work from home, they think that means like eight or nine hours of just straight productivity. It's not when you start feeling your mind wandering. Let it just go for like 10 or 15 minutes do something else. In my case right now that is pretty much running around the yard like a maniac with a puppy, and I find that I'm able to focus a lot better after that. So if it looks like 15 minutes of watching Netflix or reading a book or reading around the floor,

**Jim Storer** 26:54

or maybe it's going to get your favorite dessert, which in your case would be

27:01

tiramisu. Oh, I love that. It's a good one. Yeah, strangest thing. No wholefoods has like the best tiramisu that I've managed to find in the Northeast. I'm concerned by this. But they have the best.

**Shannon Abram** 27:15

It's funny. I was at a friend's house last night, and she had gone out to lunch at a restaurant in Boston called SP Portello. That has amazing tiramisu. And she had brought it home for her husband. And he said, Ah, who wants to eat soggy cake? And I was like, No, I don't want to I want to find me out. Dealing What's your community superpower?

27:34

I would say probably your it's been this for a long time is data analysis, you handed me a giant CSV full of chaos. And tell me that you say something intelligent about it within an hour. I will say something intelligent about it. And I will show you beautiful visualizations, and your mind will be blown like that is still my superpower to this day.

**Jim Storer** 27:55

That's a good one. And I agree with that wholeheartedly. One last question before we let you go Who or what is your community inspiration?

28:04

You know, it's not just one person. Actually, this is gonna sound like a really goofy thing. It's the moderators behind the most chaotic communities in the world. The people behind Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, those people that we literally will never know their names because they're just kind of cogs in these these giant machines. Those people inspire the heck out of me. I would love someday to actually sit down with a group of them maybe ever some hard drinks, and just hear about the work that they do. Because it's just, it's incredible. They're the reason why those big communities work, but it's amazing.

**Shannon Abram** 28:42

Oh, such a nice note to end this podcast on. Joanne, congratulations again on the award. We are super excited for you. And it was really wonderful to talk to you today.

**Jim Storer** 28:52

David, thank you. Thanks, Jillian.

**Shannon Abram** 28:56

Give me a squeeze for us.

28:59

Oh, I'll give him money. Don't worry.

**Shannon Abram** 29:01

Thank you. Bye. Thanks for listening to another episode of community conversations with the Community Roundtable. We'll see you next time.