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## TRANSCRIPT

# Community Conversations - #85 – Dianne Kibbey on Community Migrations

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

platform, community, members, technology, people, engineers, content, site, programs, migration, big, conversations, google translate, jive, customized, built, products, superpower, users, community roundtable

### SPEAKERS

Jim Storer, Dianne Kibbey, Shannon Abram

#### **Jim Storer** 00:06

Hello and welcome to another episode of community conversations from the Community Roundtable. My name is Jim store, and I'm here with my capable co host, Shannon Abram Shannon.

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

Hi, Jim, we are so excited to be recording a new episode. This week, we are with longtime friend of the Community Roundtable, longtime member of the car network. Dianne Kibbey. Hi, Dianne.

#### **Dianne Kibbey** 00:31

Hi, Shannon.

#### **Shannon Abram** 00:32

We are so excited to have you with us today. I would love for people who don't know you as well, as we know you if you could kick us off by telling us a little bit about where you work and the kind of community work you work with.

00:44

Sure, Diane Kibbey. And I'm the Global Head of Community and Social Media at Abbey net, sometimes also known as Newark in the United States, but I run a community called element 14. And element 14 has been around for about 13 years. We're a global community of engineers and electronic enthusiast. And I think we're pretty well known in the electronics industry as a place to learn about new tech, new products connect with other engineers, and really have access to engineers from all over the globe.

And we do have around 830,000 registered members but of course people do come and go. So I definitely try to focus more on the active members. But as a distributor, we work with hundreds of different manufacturers and we sponsor a lot of education, things like tech articles, webinars, workshops, online courses, and as well offer a lot of hands on activities on the community where engineers can get access to new products for road testing them or participate in a design challenge. So we've been on Jive AX for 12 of these 13 years and a year ago did a migration to the parent platform. And so we've been on the platform just about ready to celebrate our year anniversary.

**Jim Storer** 02:01

Wow, there was a lot of great insights there. Let me just dig into a couple of them. You said about 830,000 members, that seems like a lot and probably stress as a platform. Can you talk a little bit about you said you moved from Dr. X to verify that had to be one of the considerations when you were when you were thinking about that migration?

02:21

It definitely did. I mean, because we've been around for 13 years, and you think about 13 years of content and 13 years of discussions. The robustness of the platform was a huge factor in which one we went with. And I, I'd say another big one was after 13, while 12 years, we were highly customized, we run a lot of specialty type programs that drive engagement, but they're more around our products and what we do, so we had to find a platform that was highly customizable, as well. So those but those were definitely the two biggest factors.

**Jim Storer** 02:57

And I'd also love to have you talk a little bit about you mentioned that you focus more on the active members in your community. I'd love to hear I just find it fascinating how different community teams define active members. Can you talk a little bit about that? And how you guys view that?

03:12

Yes. So I would say for a long time, we've been really focused on number of registered members. And I think any of us in the field know that can be a bit of a vanity metric. People do register, they come on, they get what they want, they don't come back and they're not active. And then you have to keep in mind that number of registered users is over a pretty long period of time. And so I've worked really hard with our management team and our comms teams to talk about what's really important. And it's not really about the number of people that register. I mean, it's it's important if you don't have new people coming in, you can't grow your community. But to me whether or not they're active and doing things, if you don't have that, then you don't really have a community, you have a content site. So the one thing great about Varun is they have a pretty great reporting and metrics suite that I hadn't seen before on our previous platform. And they actually give you a report that you can get at any given time that shows the number of active members. And it's based on the number of people that are actually engaging in discussion that are at answering questions. They're downloading content. And then it doesn't count things just like just registered. It's whether or not they're actually doing something to engage with one of your activities, or engage with another member. And so one of the reasons now that we can actually use that as one of our key metrics is because we have this very Reporting Suite that gives us access to this.

**Shannon Abram** 04:49

That's really interesting. I have to imagine with such a large audience that they're very geographically diverse.

04:57

Yes, we have some of those registered numbers, they come from 48 different countries. I think the majority come from Europe and from the Americas. But equally, we have, if you look at the breakout, we probably have about 40%, from Europe, about 38% from the US. And then the rest is from Asia pack. I think engineers in general are used to communicating in English from the standpoint that like things like technical data sheets, and things like that are usually in English, but they can actually communicate in any language they would choose, the site is actually only translated officially into English and then into Chinese that we do have some other translations of the navigation of the site. But what we've done is we've built in this Google Translate feature, which everyone knows Google Translate, but we, we took this feature from our drive platform and added it to the Varun platform. And this is why it allows at any point, someone could hit the Google Translate widget and have that conversation on the site translated. And our members also are really great about people not being maybe English is not their first language and totally open to helping people. I mean, we've had members come on and say it's not my first language. And everyone comes in and says, that's who cares? Like, we're so glad you're here. And they communicate regardless, but they can use Google Translate to help that communication.

**Shannon Abram** 06:29

That's really amazing. So with such a geographically diverse user base, even if there's sort of chunks of people using the same language, have you found programming that sort of transcends that? Or is that just a constantly evolving thing where you're trying to connect with members?

06:46

Yeah, I think whenever you're dealing with a global audience, it's always going to be a challenge, we do, for the most part, have the same programming globally, I know a lot of times we're working with our supplier network, and they'll want to do a program just in Germany or just in France. And for the most part, we tell them that we would prefer to, for it to be global. And like I said, we have members coming in from China, from India, from Indonesia, from Germany, and they're all presented with the same general content. I think that for those people that maybe aren't as fluent in English, there's still some struggle, they may not be as apt to watch the element 14 present show, for example, that's a show that we put on the community on YouTube, where a group of makers build different things or do educational episodes on different technologies. But we are looking at ways to translate some of that content for local language. Through some technology we built we can detect which region someone comes from, and actually show them specific content, if we want, we've definitely built that, which actually does remind me of one thing we have done that really is geared towards that geographical difference. When we talk about products on the community, we want to make it really easy for someone to buy that product if they're interested. And we have technology that actually detects their region, and their IP. And we'll actually link them to the correct transactional site, because we do have local language transactional sites, so it will see where they're from and make sure they go to the right site. So with that

technology, we can show programs specific by region, I think it's just more finding on our end the resources to actually develop those regional programs. I'm sure everyone's challenged by that when you're in a global community.

**Jim Storer** 08:42

There have been a lot of conversations in the car network about the challenges of running a global community. And it's something that we hear members talking about on an ongoing basis. So I definitely agree with you there. Diane, I'd love to go back to your migration, because that's a that's another hot topic in the network. And I'd love to have you share a little bit more specifically about kind of your timeline. When did you start the process? What were some of your major milestones along the way? And how long was that overall process? If you could take a little time to share that with us?

09:16

Sure. It was it was definitely a very long process. From the moment that jive was sold to determining if they were really going to end its life. I think we took several years to decide on a new platform. Once we were notified that jive x had indeed reached its end of life and within support. I would say it was almost a two week or sorry, a two year period where we closely evaluated for well known platforms of which at the at the time where it was actually called intelligent, but they were always in the top of our evaluation. There are some really good platforms out there. But what we found that was that many of them could not be customized and they were hosted in such a way that you've really couldn't integrate them with your internal systems. So I was gonna say, I think one of our first kind of our first activities to start evaluating was through the CR network. And it was a technology forum that you guys had, where you had all the different vendors there. And we could actually talk to them plus talk to different car members that would recommend what platform they were on. And I can still remember three specific people at the car network that kept saying the only platform that's going to work for you is Telligent, because they knew the high level of customizations that we had. So I'll say that was like the early days, then we started getting into thinking about all the individual features, we did the request for proposals, we had live demos, we went back and said, you know, we, when we were down to two, we gave them our list of core integrations that we needed. And some of our key programs and definitely parent was the only one intelligence slash parent that was about the time they became parent was the only one that could really do what we needed it to do. Even on dive x, we were highly customized, to support many of our unique programs. On top of being customized, we wanted to be able to do the regular upgrades, you know, version upgrades without a complete rewrite of code. And this was something that was a major pain point for us on die backs. So it not only had to be customizable, but every time we did an upgrade, it didn't require everything to be rewritten. So that was one of our big reasons. There. There really were no out of the box solutions that could support our key programs. And if you look at VeriSign, one of the big things that they have is a site is based on widgets, and the fact that every page can be edited, because it's widgetized is great. So you don't have to actually adjust pages using the core code. And they also seem to have a lot more access to update and change things via API's, which makes it a lot easier to integrate with other systems, because we want to be able to integrate our community with core marketing systems such as our on 24, webinar platform, and Marketo. And then in addition, Janet's, what you had mentioned earlier was the robustness of the platform, because we were talking about migrating hundreds of 1000s of users and millions of conversations, probably. Yeah.

**Jim Storer** 12:19

And so and and would you say that it was a two to three year period from, you know, beginning to realize that end of life was happening for Dr. X and you were live. And on the new platform?

12:30

Yes, I will say we were down to within three weeks of the platform completely being no longer supported would be removed, we waited, we waited until we absolutely had to move over. And then we waited until we actually had most of the core functionality built before we switched all of our users over. So I would say it did take about three years end to end.

**Jim Storer** 12:54

No migration is seamless. But have your users been thumbs up? Is it been a good migration for them as well?

13:01

I think it has from a functionality standpoint, overall, it's it was a huge adjustment for them. There's and they understand no platform is going to function the same way. And so you know, adding a comment is done this way and driving, it's done this way invariance. So I don't think that any of it was complex, it was more, you know, it's change. But we did a lot with our members. Early on, we have a group of top members that have been with us since the early days. And we engage them right away, telling them what was happening, telling them about our new platform, we actually gave them access to our DEV environment. So they could go try different things. We gave regular webinars and product demos to show people the differences. We created FAQs, and really tried to bring them along with us. And I think we did, but there's never you can never switch a platform without some pains with their learning. So, you know, we spent a lot of time working with them identifying any issues, they found working with them on training. And then you know, as you as you release the new site, we did more webinars to help people move along. Now. Now. It's just how they do it. Right. They're used to it. It's what they do every day. Yeah, I

**Shannon Abram** 14:15

think that's, I mean, interesting to think about anyone signing up after that change took place. It's this is just what they're used to. So there's not that sort of transition for them. This is unrelated to that specifically, but something I think about I was talking with someone who was telling me that they used their migration as a chance to sort of clean up the cobwebs in their community was the phrase I use. Did you guys I mean, 12 years of content is a lot did you decide to sort of clean out the cobwebs, and if so, how did you decide what stayed and what went?

14:44

Absolutely, it was a great chance to do that. And we spent a lot of time trying to come up with the criteria on what we would get rid of and what we would keep including registrations right. If somebody's registered 10 years ago hasn't been on the site since we wanted to kind of clean up our database. And so, you know, in looking at the content, and where we would do cut offs, we looked at several different options, and then decided on one that we thought was the best route. So if someone hadn't logged in, in probably a four year period, we did disable their ID, everyone had to reset their passwords anyway,

when they came on to the new site. And so far, we haven't run into any problems with that. I mean, if someone were to come back in and say, Hey, I used to be on here, and I'm not anymore, we can usually kind of find their content and get them back on. But that's happened in in in very few cases. And then, same with conversations. Same with old content products that are no longer, you know, they've there, they've reached their end of life, we cleaned up our product database, we cleaned up discussions, and definitely the users. But by just going through and kind of disabling those older users, one thing we didn't do is if that conversation had gotten a lot of feedback, we basically kind of anonymize some of the content and left it on the community because it would make those more Current Conversations not make sense. But it did take a lot of time. But we're very, very glad that we've cleaned this up now. And we've kind of can start fresh and go forward. But I would say to anyone looking at a migration, don't forget to do that, that's a that's a big piece of it is deciding what to keep and what to get rid of, we have another community in our company that's going through the same thing, and they're not replatforming. So it's even harder to do when you're replatforming. It's a great time to do it.

**Jim Storer** 16:37

That's a great reminder, I would love to tap into any other aha moments you had in making this this technology switch. And so are there any that come to mind?

16:48

I don't know if I call them aha moments, I can talk a little bit about some of the things that were really important to us, I think they had mentioned, we thought it was really important that the platform be able to integrate with other things that we wanted to use a big piece of what we have our design challenges, product, road tests, people take quizzes. And so we absolutely need to have our form software built in. And you know, you talk about things that you absolutely needed to go live with. This was one of those we use HCL to do, really the registration forms for most of our top programs. So it was really important that we get this in right at lunchtime. And because of the way it is widgetized and works through API's, it was not as difficult as it would have been on another platform. I think another thing is video. Video is a huge piece for showing engineers how to build projects, how to show off technology, unboxing, videos, things like that. And our integration with bright Cove was also needed right away. As I mentioned, we have a weekly video show for engineers called element 14 presents. And that's been a big piece of our site for a long time. So, you know, working with video was also a big thing that we had Tabligh.

**Shannon Abram** 18:05

We didn't prepare for this question. But I just wanted to ask sort of do you have like on what's next, like it sounds like you've sort of settled in to the new platform, you've settled into how it's working for you? Is there a big like, I can't wait to do this project on the horizon for you guys.

18:23

Absolutely. These things are never ever going to be not, you know, busy on a community, you're always thinking of improvements that you could make one thing that we're really focused on. And I'm really excited to make got some features coming out soon as around SEO, and just making some improvements where we can actually go in and customize the metadata to make things more findable on Google. So that's something that we're working on right now with a third party and that should be released soon. We also just underwent some benchmarking studies using fever B, and have some

really, it was such a chance to go back and look at the basics. And honestly, before the before the platform migration, we didn't have time to do this. And so now that the community has been live for a year, we really wanted to take a look back at the basics and say, What are we doing well, what are we doing well, and we got some great feedback. So we're going to be making some changes to our UI. I think we're happy with our UI. But just in looking at it, we've got some things we want to do around accessibility, and just probably doing more things to highlight our members. I think you get kind of focused on all these great programs are releasing, but in the end, it's really about your members. And so we're trying to bring all that back into the different pages on our homepage, recognizing our leaderboard showing content, relevant content and personalized content to users so it's more customized for them. We've got a lot of things coming So far we want to get kind of get back to the basics and really focus on our members, and not just the programs that we're releasing.

**Jim Storer** 20:07

I think it's a really good good insight to conclude with before we jump into the speed round, I think the concept of technology being a critical piece, but the way you use that technology to service your members really being the most important aspect of community building, so thank you for that tie in. And so we love doing a speed round at the end. And it's a it's a little bit of fun. It kind of gives us an all the listeners a little bit of an insight into who you are. And we'd like to do that now. So I'll kick it off. Are you a member of Team dog or Team Cat?

20:44

Team Cat for sure. I have two gargantuan white ragdoll cats at home Jake and Elwood. Oh, after the Blues Brothers.

**Shannon Abram** 20:54

So I would love a photograph of them to share along with this podcast.

**Jim Storer** 20:58

I had a cat named Jake as well. So but now I have a dog named mozzie.

**Shannon Abram** 21:05

What are you binging right now?

21:07

Let's see. Is it something I can mention?

**Shannon Abram** 21:10

I don't know.

21:13

No, I'm just kidding. What did i What did we just binge we just binge was called Blackbird, which was on Apple, which is took place in Chicago. I don't know if you've heard of it. But it was it was excellent. You couldn't stop watching it.

**Jim Storer** 21:28

So much. It was recommended that to me, so I can't wait to binge that myself.

21:32

Yeah. And it has the actor that was in rocket man. And I cannot think of his name. But he's fantastic. And really Otis, I think it was his last role. So

**Jim Storer** 21:42

the speed round originated during the beginning of the pandemic, I think so what is your favorite work from home hack? I don't

21:52

know if I'd call it a hack. But I'll say that what maintained my sanity was I bought some really nice outdoor furniture and worked outside. Summers in Chicago are really short. And you have to really soak it up. So I thought, My gosh, if I'm home, I went out and I you know, I can shave myself from the sun. But I literally worked outside every day during the summer that it wasn't too hot. And I just felt so good.

**Jim Storer** 22:20

Well, Shannon and I are from New England. So we have the short summer concepts. Yeah.

**Shannon Abram** 22:26

What is your favorite dessert?

22:30

Cheese Cake, preferably with chocolate chips? And an Oreo crust?

**Shannon Abram** 22:35

Oh, I like a specific answer.

**Jim Storer** 22:38

What is your community superpower besides migrations, which apparently is one of them?

22:44

From my standpoint, I mean, I've been doing this for, you know, 13 years. And it was a total role switch for me. But I think because I come from a technical background, I was always I mean, going way back, I was a computer science and math major. And so I've always had this nerdy technology side. And I think running a community of engineers is like just playing dreamy to me. And I think my superpower is because I have such a passion for electronics and for technology. That it just this job. Just there's, there's just so many opportunities. And I think I'm able to look at that and what interests people have in technology, like we get a lot of requests to do like kind of flat marketing that you might do banner ads, and things like that. And I always try to translate that back into. We've got engineers, they don't want a marketing pitch, they really want to know about the technology behind the technology. And so I always stop what we're doing sometimes and say, Okay, it's an engineering and I like that. But I think I think



that's what I would, I would view as my biggest superpower for running element 14 is just having that technology background and being able to think like someone in tech versus a marketing person.

**Shannon Abram** 23:58

Okay, final question, Who or what is your community inspiration?

24:03

I think I could name a couple of things in that in that area. So the first thing I would say is fever B, I've been following fever B since I was first told to start a community. And I've been following them forever. And they have the best common sense approach on how to engage people. And just in general, getting back to, you know, thinking about this. This is about people. It's not just about the technology. It's not just about, you know, the marketing, it's about people and how you engage people. And so they have always been just such a great source of information. I was really happy that we finally got to do some consulting work with them. And then I'm also just going to mention the network of people running communities of which the CR network also provides. There is nothing better than talking to others that run communities. And whenever I leave any kind of meeting where there's other community managers or community owners just talking to them, and realizing you're all kind of dealing with the same type of issues. It's like you always walk away with like 20 ideas of things that you could be doing. So I would say that I'd have to make that both of those are really nice.

**Jim Storer** 25:19

Thank you, Diane. And we we love working with rich he actually spoke at our event that we did in Boston in June. And speaking of events, we're looking forward to seeing you in Boston on October 24. For the Community Technology Summit. Verint will be there as well. So thank you for taking the time today. We really enjoyed talking to you on the podcast.

25:42

Great. It was a great tech talking to you guys too. I really enjoy being a part of the car Network.

**Shannon Abram** 25:47

Thanks, Diane. Have a great day. You as well. Thanks for listening to another episode of community conversations with the Community Roundtable. We'll see you next time.