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## TRANSCRIPT

# Community Conversations - #86 – Tim Bamber on Automation Tools

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

community, building, people, football, coaches, groups, moment, bit, platform, mobile, learners, guess, cohorts, reporting, question, conversations, learning, clone, migrated, england

### SPEAKERS

Jim Storer, Tim Bamber, Shannon Abram

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

Hello, and welcome to another edition of community conversations. My name is Jim store. I'm the founder of the Community Roundtable. And I'm joined today by my capable co host, Shannon Abraham, Shannon.

#### **Shannon Abram** 00:11

Hi, Jim, we are super excited to be recording another episode of community conversations today, we have a brand new guest, and we're very excited to talk to Tim Bamber. Hi, Tim, how you doing? I'm good, Tim. So this is exciting. Jim and I are located in the United States. And Tim is located in the UK, which is very exciting. So like a transatlantic situation happening today. Tim, could you tell us a little bit about where you work and the kind of community you work with?

#### **Tim Bamber** 00:43

Yeah, absolutely. So I work for the Football Association in England. And they basically govern and looked after football, or soccer, as you might call it over in the States. And the community that I can manage is the England football community. And that basically looks after anyone or helps to support anyone with an interest in their game. And those working in the game. So it could be anyone such as a coach or referee, running a club running a league, or a volunteer, or just someone who likes football.

#### **Jim Storer** 01:17

Amazing. So all things football, I got to imagine you've got some pretty passionate community members.

**Tim Bamber** 01:23

Yes, yeah, I think football is one of those thoughts. It's pretty popular, especially over in England, see, a lot of people have a lot of opinions about it, which is great. And a lot of people are very passionate about it as well. So you often find a lot of people are pushing themselves to try and get better and learn from each other. So it makes a laser good foundation to predict for a community to take place. Yes, or to build.

**Jim Storer** 01:50

I think it's a good thing that you got a passionate fan base. A lot of folks that are running communities are trying to build that that engagement and that passion. So having it at the gecko probably is a good thing, although it may spill over into some challenging situations for you as a as a community manager.

**Tim Bamber** 02:08

Yeah, absolutely. Whilst it's very popular sport, when you got a lot of passionate people, I'm certainly under no illusion that building the community is going to be easy. Building community is very difficult. We're still very young in the community growth cycle. I guess we're still building we're still learning. Engagement certainly can be higher. We're sending we're getting engagement, but relative to the amount of people that like football or involved in football, is probably quite low. Right? Is it isn't that at the moment, which is just where are the journey, but it's also excited to see where we can go with it. So yeah, it's an exciting challenge, I guess is the best way to put it.

**Jim Storer** 02:48

Amazing. So you said you're relatively young, tell us about how long you've been up and running. And if you can share a little bit about the technology platform you're using with this community?

**Tim Bamber** 02:58

Yeah, no problem. So we we had a community running couple of years ago, and we had to change platforms a couple of years ago. So it was December 2020, when we migrated to Varun solution intelligence. So we deployed that migrated across, we also worked with a company called three sides who help support support us on a on a SaaS model. So yeah, we've worked closely with Verint and three sides to build what is now the England football community and use various integrations, various solutions along the way. And I imagine there'll be plenty more to come as well. It's a powerful product, something we're grateful we're excited to use. Yeah. Can you use the word excited a lot for it? It's true. They're excited to see where we can take the platform. In our context, I guess,

**Shannon Abram** 03:49

about how many members do you have?

**Tim Bamber** 03:52

Just over 55,000?

**Shannon Abram** 03:54

Oh, that's a lot of people. With that many people. Do you use any automated features for member management?

**Tim Bamber** 04:01

Yeah, we do. Yeah. Part of it is quite a different model, I guess, for community. So we have coaching courses, where coaches want to come on learn about basics of coaching the game, that's all online, it's digital at the moment, especially the level one course. And we've set up an automation whereby if someone signs up to the course, they automatically get added to that courses community group. So this particular qualification I'm talking about is called the introduction to coaching football, which is the the level one. The reason why we've set up this automation is because of the amount of people going on to it. So we get in and around 25,000 people on this course each year, and we've set up cohort groups for for the learners and there's probably about four to five cohorts a month of around 500 people. So for me immunity admin management perspective setting up that amount of groups getting that amount of people on and trying to manage it is quite, it was quite laborious to start off, it's certainly a different way to look at community management or building community. But yeah, we set up the automation to allow learners a seamless approach to getting into groups.

**Jim Storer** 05:22

And just to follow on talk more about groups, is this a kind of community where members can create their own groups? Or do you have kind of tight controls over the creation of new groups can you can share a little bit more because I, I can kind of imagine different ways this could go.

**Tim Bamber** 05:39

Yeah, at the moment, we don't allow for users to create groups, it's something we would want to do in the future. But we're just not in the right place at the moment. In regards to that course. We've also created an extra add on with Varun, which is to help clone a group. Again, for the reason being that we've got so many groups, so many learners coming on, it's a lot easier for us to clone, the group that we've already created for the cohorts over and over again. So future new new cohorts can conjoin them, we also create other groups where there's a need, or we have a request to that request generally comes from another department internally, in future with something we will look at where if we have a group of people in a football club, who want their own group, then that's something we could certainly look at, in hopefully in the not too distant future. But yeah, at the moment, it's cloning and automating for that particular course, which has helped me specifically now.

**Jim Storer** 06:45

Right, I've got to imagine it could be very complicated if you didn't have that cloning feature. So you mentioned I think what I heard was that you launched the community in December of 2020. Is that correct?

**Tim Bamber** 06:57

Yeah, well, we migrated Yeah. And it was a very soft launch. It was prior to, to me being in post, actually. So I kind of came in in the January 2021, and inherited it. And then since then, we have looked at redefining and working through the strategy of the community. And we had another soft launch later that year, with some UX development. And now we're looking at version two, or the next iteration, I guess,

**Jim Storer** 07:24

where these training courses before COVID, were they face to face? Or were they always online?

**Tim Bamber** 07:30

No, they, they were actually a lot more face to face. And it was prior to COVID. It's actually to do with an FA initiative. So there's been a general strategy in place, I guess, to move courses from being face to face, and delivered in different counties to being housed more in house and digitally. So we have 50, that 50 County ifas. In the UK, so or in England, sorry. And the courses were traditionally rolled out through the county ifas. That still is the case to some extent, but a lot of the admin management has been bought in house, it's been made more digital, so less face to face. And there's a number of reasons, which I won't go into detail on. But it's yeah, there's a lot of finance involved, a lot of things to do with the efficiency, I guess, of operating and managing the courses. So off the back of that, or in line with that we've inherited the community or built the community. And we tried to merge the two, in some respects to create a bit of a blended learning approach, where we've got an LMS, we've got the course delivery, we've got elearning. But we've also got a community there for cohort groups to chat to each other and extend that learning if and when they want to.

**Jim Storer** 08:46

That's how I thought you might answer. And it's fascinating to me that the the communities become really a critical component to the overall model, the training model, as you shift from face to face to online learning. Right. And so I've got to imagine that maybe that's some of the internal meetings and kind of the strategy conversations you've been having internally, is, how do we re envision, you know what this community means to the overall process? I mean, you're you're going through a lot of internal changes, it sounds like in order to support this new way of providing and reporting back on these training courses, so it's nice to hear that the community is really helping to support that.

**Tim Bamber** 09:31

Yeah, yeah, you nailed it. Jim is exactly the case. It's, as a lot of conversations, a lot of things changing, not just community but FA wide, and it's a bit mad, it's hectic, complex, but it's going in the right direction. Yeah, it's a challenge. You know, you've got arguably a course on an LMS. And then you've got a community which is separate thing and you're trying to merge the two, you know, and you've got other platforms such as learning experience platforms and things out there. essentially pursue but the community we feel is very powerful. And it certainly helps to link. Not just coaches, with coaches on the course, but coaches with other roles or people in other roles. So referees people in clubs, where they might not have had access to previously. And that's the one benefit, I think, of doing it this way that this community has an intelligent tool allows us to do that, you know, it's so powerful. So yeah, we're working through it. It's not perfect by any means at the moment. But, you know, we learn every day. And it's we're getting great feedback on it from learners, which is probably the most important thing for us at the moment. But we are also learning from them and their experiences.

**Jim Storer** 10:44

In a prior life, I worked for a platform company that had an LMS component. And so that whole social learning and community kind of coming together was part and parcel of what we were we're building. And so I understand the complexity. And I also wonder, you know, as you introduce new use cases,

you know, whether it's, you know, having groups for fans of certain football clubs, or what have you, it that adds another layer. So it's just think of him thinking about that, as you're revisiting your strategy is going to be important. And I see much time I'm sure Shannon probably has a question in here, too.

**Shannon Abram** 11:22

No, this is this is super interesting. I mean, I do have another question. But I've been enjoying the conversation. So it sounds like you have a lot going on, obviously, how do you measure and report on your community back to team members? Or stakeholders? Or executives? Are there frameworks you use or reports you use?

**Tim Bamber** 11:40

Yeah, so we use data from Google Analytics, we use data from hot jar, when we use the data for intelligence reporting itself. We're currently in the process of building a Power BI dashboard. And that is a part of a larger project again, so we're trying to link in with all dashboards within the effect, in essence. So yeah, that's taking a lot of time. So at the moment, we do have a bit of a workaround. We use Google Data Studio, and even basic Excel reporting and function, just to get the main stats that we want, at the moment, get a picture of where we're at. But yeah, that will become more and more advanced and more layered over the coming months.

**Jim Storer** 12:20

And I need to know what's next. I mean, it's, it sounds like you're heavy in strategy. So I've got to imagine, as a team, you're talking about, okay, once we get done with this, this current set of priorities, what's next? I can talk about

**Tim Bamber** 12:35

that. Yeah, we have, it's a good question. We have redefined or we're redefining its purpose. Generally speaking across the whole community, I think we're now at a stage because we've got so many people on it, it's grown, it's going to be quite a big beast. And I think we're we're realizing that as an organization, so it's, it's next is kind of how do we manage that more widely? How do we manage that with different departments? And one thing we certainly look to go after is like community champion program, for example, and working with the national volunteer manager to look into that. I guess, Devine defining the objectives of that, the perimeters of that, what are they going to do? When are they going to do it? How are you going to do it? Will it work for the learners or the users or the community members, whatever term you want to use. So there's, there's that aspect, we also haven't turned on any reward and recognition on the platform yet, interestingly, which is something we're desperate to do. So that will obviously go hand in hand with a community champion program. And then there's various other marketing aspects that we want to start to do to launch it a little bit harder. So say, and get some really cool promotional videos out there, because we haven't really pushed it hugely, which is, again, quite exciting in some respects, because we've had over well over a million views already, which is great. And that's without a hugely big marketing campaign. So they would be the things really pulling it back. We're still still building, we're still looking at the UX and UI of platform, from what it looks like our users using it. So that's where we're at at the moment. But yeah, they're the kind of things we want to go after next, for sure.

**Jim Storer** 14:22

I've got a quick follow on to that, because I was able to take in a demo of variants, mobile solution and kind of some of the neat tips and tricks that they've been, they've been building behind the scenes and just wondering if your audiences is going to be receptive to mobile, and if that's something that is also on your radar.

**Tim Bamber** 14:44

Yes. And yes. It's going to end up, you know, we need an app. We need an app we need we need mobile, it needs to be easy on mobile. So yeah, 100% And the reason why that's so relevant for us, is because we're targeting or what Working with I guess, football coaches referees and they're out on the field, they're out on the pitch. They're out in the stadium, wherever they, you know, playing football coaching football. More often than not, they're not gonna have a laptop next to them, they're gonna have their mobile in their pocket or when they get back. So if the if they wanted to use the community there, and then it's there on the mobile for them to ask a question. But also, yeah, we feel that our audiences from the data we gather, they generally use their mobile, more to access course material, via our website, etc. So yeah, for sure, mobile is something that we definitely look at.

**Shannon Abram** 15:37

That makes a lot of sense. We talked to a lot of community managers who are in similar situations where they're trying to connect with maybe employees that work in the field or on a factory floor. And it is really something you need to think about that if you're not spending all day sitting at your desk, you need to be able to get the community physically in their hands somehow. So it sounds like you're going about that in a really thoughtful way. We didn't prepare you for speed round, but we love the speed round. So if you're ready, we're gonna kick it off. What does that involve? They're gonna ask you quick questions, and you're just gonna give us the answer off the top of your head. I am very confident that you're going to do well. Okay. Are you on Team dog? Or Team Cat? Team dog? That's the right answer. Good.

**Jim Storer** 16:22

You're with your peers then.

**Shannon Abram** 16:24

Yeah, I do feel like I've made a lot of enemies in the Team Cat world, but I can't I am who I am. I can't help. And I

**Tim Bamber** 16:31

do have a team dog sat on my feet right now. So he says hello.

**Jim Storer** 16:39

The next one for the Speed Round is what are you bingeing? And typically we asked this around or you know, people are watching series or TV shows, right?

**Tim Bamber** 16:51

Yes, we've just watched a TV show. It's on BBC in the UK. And it was called the captcha and if you have that over in the States, but it's yeah, the captcha and then there was another program called the suspect. We also watch I admit it home away in Australia quite a lot.

**Shannon Abram** 17:14

There's no There's no shameful answers.

**Jim Storer** 17:16

I'm writing that one down the CAPTCHA. I'm gonna look it up.

**Shannon Abram** 17:20

What is your since so many people have started working from home during the last few years? Do you have a work from home hack that you use to help you work more productively?

**Tim Bamber** 17:31

Absolutely. Question. From Home hack. I wouldn't actually say I do. It's a bit of a boring answer. Really?

**Jim Storer** 17:38

It sounds like a dog is slippers is probably the best way. Best answer right? He's a dog and slippers.

**Tim Bamber** 17:43

Yeah. Yeah, we've recently bought a big cafeteria because I like my coffee. So that would be a It's not much of a hack. It's more of a just a necessity, I guess,

**Jim Storer** 17:58

are related to that. Can I ask you your favorite dessert?

**Tim Bamber** 18:00

Favorite dessert? sticky toffee pudding?

**Jim Storer** 18:04

Okay, I'm gonna have to look that one up. Because although I've watched quite a bit of the Great British baking show, I don't think they've made sticky toffee pudding. In any of the episodes that I've

**Tim Bamber** 18:14

watched. Have you if you don't try to get off your bill engine?

**Shannon Abram** 18:17

We don't really have an analogue for it here, sadly. Which is I mean, it's sad. But what is your community superpower?

**Tim Bamber** 18:27

These are good questions. superpower being the only main sporting community in the UK or England,

**Jim Storer** 18:38

maybe golf. And as to the community inspiration, either a person or an organization or or anything. Yeah,

**Tim Bamber** 18:47

I have quite a lot of the other community managers I speak to a quite inspiring if I'm honest. A lot of them use their and yeah, I mean, just to name a few. So there's Ellenberg del from Miller find her expert inspiring. There's Raquel from microfocus really inspiring as well. And then Ivana from IGT, engineering, they're very good. And I do listen to a lot of Richard Millington as well.

**Shannon Abram** 19:11

That's wonderful. We're gonna have to look those people up. I love it. So Tim, thank you so much for spending part of your day with us. I really appreciate it. It's been a really interesting conversation. My husband actually coaches our son's football team here soccer team, and I'm going to send him to you guys because he has no soccer background. He sort of like accidentally signed up and now he's the coach and he could use some help. So this has been very exciting personally for me. Awesome.

**Jim Storer** 19:36

Yeah, I did the same. I coached both of my daughters and here in the States did several levels of training. Those were both in person, which is what prompted my question earlier, but appreciate what you're doing for the sport.

**Tim Bamber** 19:49

Yeah, that's fantastic. Yeah, well, if there's anything we can help with, please, you know, please get in touch. You know, more than happy to and yeah, thank you so much for inviting me on. It's it's an honor Our pleasure really enjoyed it

**Jim Storer** 20:02

thank you Tim