TRANSCRIPT

Community Conversations - #91 – Catherine Hackney on Community Tools

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

community, platform, tools, data, organization, understand, work, manager, report, conversations, stakeholders, audience, customers, catherine, impacting, perceive, technical aspect, account, different platforms, switch

SPEAKERS

Catherine Hackney, Anne Mbugua, Shannon Abram

Anne Mbugua 00:08
Catherine, if you could just introduce yourself, and then we can get right into the questions. So we need to talk about tools.

Catherine Hackney 00:15
Yeah, sure. I'm Katherine Hackney. I am the principle of confident communities consulting. I've been working with online communities for about nine years, and mainly on the Higher Logic platform as what most of my clients are using at this point in time.

Anne Mbugua 00:33
Wonderful, it's great to have you here, Catherine. So tell us how thinking about tools affects your community work?

Catherine Hackney 00:40
Yeah, so I believe what tools you're using is immensely important to how a community manager does their work, really, it? You know, depending on what your platform and what your tools can do, it dictates how you can set and achieve your goals. I know how members are going to perceive the community. It's, it's the thing they're actually interacting with, right. So what tools you use with your community, and what mainly what platform you're on, also, like largely affects your budget and planning for the community. So it's really worth doing your research and fully preparing for like conversations with the stakeholders, and those who are making the decisions about the community budget. You know, and as a community manager, you should also be able to understand how your platform works, what it's integrated to, and you know, what to do if something stops working with the platform itself, or your

integration. And I think that's not always the type of task that we think about as community managers or as part of community management. But it I think it definitely needs to be part of the role to have a little bit of that technical aspect as well.

Anne Mbugua 01:54
Yes, absolutely. So what jumped out at you, in the Tools data this year in the state of community management research?

Catherine Hackney 02:02
Yeah, so I really believe that the increase in organizations who are not planning to migrate to a new platform, having increased in 2022, and 2022, from an existing one, that's a positive thing, right? It is very expensive, takes up a lot of resources and time to switch platforms. So it gives community managers a lot more time and money to put into actual relationship building and a real community management versus, you know, having to manage their tools and platforms. So I think it's a good thing that not too many people want to switch. And also it it hopefully says something about the platform's themselves, if the vendors are listening to their customers and doing a better job, not serving them.

Anne Mbugua 02:56
Yeah. I'm curious, what advice would you give a community professional? Who's starting to dig into tools at their organization?

Catherine Hackney 03:06
Yeah, so when I'm planning to start using a new tool, or a new platform or switching them, I try to understand how the tool will work with my existing community, you know, of your members, specifically, your audience, again, how they will perceive it, you know, are they a really technologically advanced audience and expect a very modern and, you know, almost futuristic platform that they're using? Right? Or is it a, you know, an audience that is okay with something that's a little bit more old fashioned, as long as it's functional? So understanding that, and understanding how easy it's going to be for your users to adopt as well, right? That's, that's definitely something you want to take into account, maybe do some user testing and interviewing a few of your community members to understand their needs, maybe if you can show them a potential tool or platform you want to be using, and get their feedback right away before you actually spend the money and make the big switch. You know, bring them in as early as you can to the conversations. And there are so many options out there nowadays, I think we've seen especially since the pandemic, a lot of new platforms have come into the market, right. And I don't think that's a bad thing. I do honestly think that there is a platform out there for everybody. So when I'm talking to different community managers or different organizations, I'm likely to recommend different platforms to them based on their audience and their community needs. Because different platforms do different things better. So you know, take that into account for yourself. Have your list of must haves and nice to haves and things like that when you're going into and really do your research. urge on your tools. Right?

Anne Mbugua 05:03
So my other thought on this is how have you used the state of community management, recent research in your community work?

Catherine Hackney 05:13

Yeah, so I was even recently looking at the 2021 data, and I kind of do scan through and really love the visuals. Of course, you know, the data that's being displayed for me, because as a Community Consultant myself, a lot of the data that's there is going to help me set expectations for myself and for my customers. And it's really interesting to just understand, like, what are the most popular community platforms? See, I mostly work with external communities. So they're, you know, being data on how external communities deliver a range of customer objectives and what those are. And, you know, it kind of gives me a little bit of inspiration as well. As well, as you know, that data on behavior changes that are impacted by communities. I mean, all of that information is really important, and helpful for an organization who has a community to understand. It's also a data you can take back to those stakeholders and continue to get, you know, buy in for the community so that they can understand, you know, this is how a community is potentially impacting organizations. So you can look and see what data the state of community management report is giving you, and then dig into your own data and prove that ROI, prove that the community is showing value to your audience. So it's a very helpful tool in that way.

Anne Mbugua 06:43

That's fantastic. So I'm wondering, what else are you excited about to read in the report this year?

Catherine Hackney 06:51

Yeah, well, when I'm thinking about the 2020 report coming out, when I was looking again, at the 2021 report, I know I'm interested to understand what the changes are going to be in the most popular community platforms. Again, learning more about how communities are impacting member behaviors, if you know, and as those numbers kind of adjust over time looking at past reports, compared to the newer reports. And just understanding that is really helpful to a community manager. And seeing the updated average community engagement rates, right, because right, I think all of us have heard the 99 one rule, but it's so out of date now. Right? That and that specific piece of data is, again, so important to me to help set expectations for myself and for my clients so that we can measure, you know, a little bit better of what is success compared to online communities in general, and then define what that means for their organization as well. Does really great. Some benchmarks for that.

Anne Mbugua 07:56

Fantastic. Well, thank you so much, Catherine for your insight on talking about tools and platforms.

Shannon Abram 08:02

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