TRANSCRIPT – Community Conversations Episode #96

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

community, mvp, esri, mvps, program, mbps, work, feedback, team, quarterly meetings, platform, questions, members, recognition, goals, binge, win, squid, games, recognized

SPEAKERS

Shannon Abram, Jim Storer, Brianna Ettley, Michelle Matthais

Jim Storer 00:06
Hello and welcome to another edition of community conversations. My name is Jim store. I'm the founder of the Community Roundtable. And I am joined today by my capable co host Shannon Abram. Shannon. Morning,

Shannon Abram 00:18
Jim, we are so excited to have two members of the award winning EZRI community team with us here today. Good morning as reteam Good morning. Good morning. I would love if you could take a minute and tell us a little bit about yourself and a little bit about EZRI for anyone who might not know and then the kind of community or communities you work with at ESRI.

Brianna Ettley 00:40
Definitely I can kick things off here. Hi, my name is Brianna Ettley. I'm a community manager with a focus on engagement and content for as your community. I grew up in the bay area. So I live in lovely San Francisco. Thanks free.

Michelle Matthais 00:53
And I'm Michelle Mathias. I'm the Manager of Community experience and programs at ESRI and I am in the mid Atlantic area. So it's cold here today, a little background on ESRI and as we community so as the global market leader in geographic information systems, otherwise known as GIS, also location intelligence and mapping software. And since 1969, we have supported customers with the geographic science and geospatial analytics. We have business and government leaders around the world that apply our technology to understand and address important challenges such as climate change, supply chain resilience, public health and social equity. Our customers work is the inspiration for everything we do as we as a community is our customer support community platform built on poro software. It is an external community. And it's a place where our customers can connect with each other with staff ask questions and share product ideas and collaborate to solve problems using GIS. I have to say

Shannon Abram 01:53

I am a bit of an Esri superfan. So it shows we've worked with as we for a long time, and I am the kind of person now who anytime you're booking a COVID vaccine, I'm like, as we as you made those maps, I know those people and my husband is like you tell and I'm like they're my clients like it's so excited. It's just so exciting to see your technology in the wild.

Brianna Ettley 02:16

We'd love to hear that. We're

Brianna Ettley 02:18

very proud of our technology and what it does for so many businesses and government agencies around the globe.

Jim Storer 02:24

So I'd like to shift gears a little bit and talk about the Community Leadership Award. You won recently for outstanding advocacy program. And it this was really recognizing the work that you did to develop and grow your MVP program at ESRI. Could you tell us a little bit more about that program and kind of how it supports the customer support community that you run?

Brianna Ettley 02:44

Absolutely. But first and foremost, my team and I would like to thank the community roundtable community and everyone who ever who voted as the community for this award, it's such an honor, we are very honored to be here. A little bit about our program started back in 2014 has evolved over the years. And as we communities MVP program currently includes 53, elite members just point zero 2% of all of the active accounts in our community. So they're very small group of people. But these elite members and other top contributors have to follow and meet the criteria. In order to be specific criteria in order to be an entry committee MVP, which is evaluated on an annual basis, community members can be invited into the group either by winning one of the top three spots in our rising star category of our annual community contest. If they hit that spot, then we offer them an invite into the MVP program. And some choose to take that and some don't want that pressure. So they they don't, or we can have referrals from either other community members or staff members. And then we also do kind of a activity every six months to a year looking at data to see who might be coming up to that top level that we might want to reach out to. So we have a little discretion on the community team. But once they've accepted the offer, we might invite them into our private user group just for the MVP, isn't it as a community team? And yeah, that's that's how we get them kicked off a little bit about MVP program growth and outcomes. So it sounds like it was an easy process to create our MVP program. But that certainly wasn't the case. And 2016 activity in the Azeri community platform had reached a standstill and members of the community were not as engaged as they were before. So we knew that we had to reassess some of our programs and goals. And one of those was the MVP program as part of our reengagement initiative as we set a goal to build a community team and a strategy to enhance and grow as a community. A part of the strategy was to revamp the our MVP or efficacy program. MVP is were interviewed for feedback and then a reoccurring question was is I was very invested in community anymore. So eight years later, and the trust and dedication initiated a positive impact across the entire

community. And I'm gonna turn it We're free to talk a little bit more specifically about some of our stats and goals.

Brianna Ettley 05:04
I definitely wanted to chime in here and touch on a few of those kind of MVP positive impacts, especially from 2022. So as your community MVPs had supplied 22% of all 6300 posts marked as accepted solutions on community questions. And from the start of the MVP program MVPs have contributed more than 14,000 accepted solution. So you know, these are these are pretty high numbers are such a small group. And with our goals in mind, we're continuously evolving and changing and every year we discuss as a team, how we can continue to grow this program and ask her Mbps for that general feedback. So with both of those in mind, what we're currently doing and what we've done this past year with our MVPs is we give them advanced permissions and Choros. And we have a private space and community where they can interact with each other and and as your community admins as well. We also plan quarterly MVP meetings with ESRI product managers. So this gives our MVPs direct access to our teams and gives them the opportunity to give feedback on your product releases and updates and so forth. We also host in person get togethers for MVPs, attending various ESRI conferences, we also try to give them as much public recognition as we can. So this past ESRI User Conference, which hosted about I think it was around like 30,000 attendees, we had the opportunity to recognize our MVPs during this event by displaying our top MVPs on a wall that was shown in a high traffic area. And also during the closing ceremony at the conference, we also had three of our top end VPS being recognized for winning the elite level in our annual as a community contest. And just a few other areas that we also had beginning of the year, we published a public letter and the community blog thanking our MVPs for their continuous contributions, which which got a lot of attention. I mentioned, we do an annual MVP feedback survey. One of the main reasons why we do this is you know, we just asked them what they'd like to see in future MVP meetings, what we can improve in as well as what they'd like to see us do that that's new. And we also do monthly member spotlights, and we've been able to interview and produce to MVP stories with the series. So yeah, it's just it's great to give them that recognition and have other members see how our MVPs got started in the GIS field in the success they've built along the way. Wow,

Jim Storer 07:20
you guys really have done a lot with that program. I mean, I guess I shouldn't be saying why you won the award. But in general, it's really inspiring to hear about the depth and breadth you've gone to with this program. You talked about how ESRI is recognizing the MVPs. And the different ways you're doing that. How involved are people that are not part of the community team? How involved are they in the MVP program?

Brianna Ettley 07:45
So one of the things that Brad mentioned that we do for MVP is are these quarterly meetings. So what we do is we ask them who from the EZRI software product team would they like to hear from or talk to or get more in depth, so we are continually reaching out to our product teams, inviting them into these conversations with the MVP is and it ends up being a win win, because they gain insights that they didn't even know were out there. And the MVP is get to dig deeper into areas of interest for them. So so

we are engaging with the product teams fairly regularly to bring their knowledge closer to the MVPs. Yeah,

Brianna Ettley 08:19
and I'd also say I'd mentioned that we do those MVP feedback surveys. So this is a great way that you know, we kind of see what they're interested in what they want to hear from and it also to a lot of our folks are not really aware of our MVPs in the program that that we run, so exposing them to our internal staff as well as great, but kind of gives them that extra level of recognition as well. So yeah, I would say these quarterly meetings are something that we really focus on and prioritize just like Michelle mentioned, it's a win win on both ends. And

Brianna Ettley 08:50
one thing you mentioned that thank you letter we sent out to the Mbps in the community at the beginning of last year, we at mentioned all of them. So they all were notified about it. They also sent that internally, we sent that to all of our internal members that are part of the community and asked them to go out and the things are recognized Mbps and we had, gosh, I don't even remember how many but we had a lot of staff go out and give recognition to our Mbps in public in that post that was like I think still our most viewed and most commented on posts this year. So that was one of those things. We're trying to get them more visibility. So we're thinking out of the box, how can we bring staff in more I see what these guys are doing? Well,

Jim Storer 09:32
that kind of recognition, I know goes a long way to solidifying someone's participation in a program like that. So that's great. You mentioned earlier in the podcast that you're on the Choros platform, I wonder if there are special features on that platform that are helping you with this MVP program.

Brianna Ettley 09:47
I think the biggest is their ability to create a role and permission set specifically for our MVP so we can give them a little bit higher permissions to edit more move content help us moderate content. that a regular user doesn't have. So the course platform allows us to do that. Other than that, I think, you know, we do use their ranking system and their badge system. And of course, so we have a couple of unique badges just for the MVPs that we've applied as well. And because we have a role for them, we can align those two more easily with the platform as it is,

Brianna Ettley 10:19
yeah, and I would say, too, we also have a private user group for them as well. So it's a private space where we can share any updates, communicate with them, any upcoming quarterly meetings, get their feedback, and a chance for them to to kind of have that conversation between themselves as well.

Brianna Ettley 10:33
And one more thing I thought of sorry, we have the ability to put a little roll badge next to their names. So they are highlighted throughout the community as an MVP, when they post when they comment, they've got that little indicator that they are an MVP, so they get that recognition. And again, that was a nice feature that chorus had that we could apply. I

Shannon Abram 10:52

love that so much of this is sort of turnkey. My next question was going to be what advice do you have for someone who sort of sees this kind of success and the kind of engagement that you get from an advocacy program? What advice would you give to someone who wants to start one for their community?

Brianna Ettley 11:09

I think a big one is just get support, I think get support from your team, managers leadership, I think having this upfront will will save you a lot of time and plan management. And it'll give you kind of that more more confidence going into starting or growing an efficacy advocacy program. Also, feedback is key. Always look for both internal and external feedback. I think a few other points I would say kind of right away is it's it's okay, to not see success right away. Trial and error is okay, especially in these early phases of starting, really any program. And lastly, if you have an idea, run with it, set your goals and in what you want to accomplish and make sure you're having check ins with stakeholders or those who are supporting the program. Because yeah, transparency goes a long way.

Jim Storer 11:51

All right, now I'd like you to get out your crystal balls. And tell us a little bit about what you see in the on the horizon for the Esri community. As we get ready to turn the page into 2024. I think

Brianna Ettley 12:02

we're definitely still looking into that crystal ball. We've got a we got a lot of fun and exciting things coming up next year. Some of that is still under wraps. But yeah, we're currently in the process of reevaluating our MVP criteria and enrolls setting new goals with this program for next year as well. So yeah, we're really excited to continue to see further growth and engagement from our MVPs. Next year, we'll also be migrating to cores do suffer whare. So our team will be spending a lot of time next year, kind of prepping for that migration. Yeah. And

Brianna Ettley 12:33

just to add on to that we are still working on that the fine details of our roadmap. So we have a lot of things planned. But I think that migration to chorus, Aurora is going to help us with a lot of our programs and allow us to do things in the platform that we haven't been able to do before. And coming back to our advocacy program, we will reach out to our VPS for feedback and usability testing as we go through that process. And they will be integral to our moving forward on the new version of Choros.

Shannon Abram 13:00

I was just going to ask, it feels like you're so lucky to have this sort of built in group of advocates, I mean, and testers who will make sure that they are I'm sure they are vocal with their feedback. So it's wonderful to sort of have them already identified as you undertake a project like that.

Brianna Ettley 13:17

Absolutely. They're, they're very valuable in that sense. And you're right, they are very vocal, they're not afraid to tell us what doesn't work and what they don't. And,

Jim Storer 13:25

you know, given that you're planning to migrate to Aurora, I think that's a pretty big item on the roadmap. So don't beat yourselves up. If you don't have a whole lot else to do.

Brianna Ettley 13:34

Yeah, it is we've just started on some of our prep and planning meetings. And it is definitely a big chunk of time and commitment. And I think it's going to take us a good portion of the year because we do have a lot of customizations in our course platform. So to kind of unwind those and redo them will be a little

Jim Storer 13:50

bit of work. Amazing. We'd like to wrap up with a speed round. So if you both are willing, we would love to ask you some quick questions. And I'll kick it off by asking you both if you're a part of Team dog or Team Cat,

Brianna Ettley 14:05

Dog, dog 100%.

Shannon Abram 14:07

Yes. Gosh, I like a quick answer. I feel like any previous listener of the podcast knows that Jim and I are both team dog. So I'm not saying there's right or wrong answers. I'm just saying that cats are sneaky. That's what I'm saying. Yes, dogs

Brianna Ettley 14:24

just love you.

Shannon Abram 14:25

They do. i My friend has a cat that bites him sometimes, like with no warning. And I'm like, I don't want to share my home with someone who I mean, I have two children. I don't need more people that might bite me for no reason. I just don't need that energy in my life. The next question is what are you binging right now?

Brianna Ettley 14:48

I just finished watching squid games the challenge, which was a great show, I think I've binge watched in just a few days. So I really liked that show.

Shannon Abram 14:57

If you were gonna interrupt me Shilo, I'm sorry, I was gonna Google it quickly, but you're near San Francisco or in San Francisco. So they might there's a thing here in Boston called immersive game box. I don't know if you like games, but it's basically like a 15 by 15 room. And three of the walls are interactive. And so you play this game like, and you have to touch the wall and their sensors. And it's this whole thing. But one of the sorts of games you can play is based on squid games. And so like it

was, if you are interested in me, no one does. So it's not like that. We went with a group of friends. It was just a really fun sort of, like, interactive thing to do if you're interested in.

Brianna Ettley 15:36
I have not heard of that. I saw something recently, it was kind of funny was right after I was done watching it. I got like an advertisement on my phone. And it was for squid games in LA. It sounds like it's something similar, but it said like, do you accept yes or no. And I was like, am I gonna get recruited into squid games? But no, that's the thing that I would definitely enjoy. I have to look into it. Thanks.

Brianna Ettley 16:00
So yeah, I just finished binge watching lessons in chemistry. And then we are saving up all the slow horses new episodes so that we can binge that probably around Christmas break time. So that's kind of two ends of the spectrum.

Jim Storer 16:16
We're going back in time. And we actually are binging the newsroom right now, which if you haven't watched it and make

Brianna Ettley 16:24
it love that show,

Jim Storer 16:25
so we develop this speed round during the pandemic. And so one of the questions that we've asked for several years is what is your favorite work from home hack?

Brianna Ettley 16:35
That one stumped, I have to think

Brianna Ettley 16:37
about what are some examples? Because I'm, I want to get creative with this answer.

Jim Storer 16:43
We spoke to someone earlier, and they talked about having a separate office from the rest of the house so that you can turn the lights off and close the door, I got a standing desk. And I think I don't know how I live without one before I had a standing desk. So that would be a work from home hack for me.

Shannon Abram 16:58
I would say one might be getting a dog because Penny does not care if I'm working. Like if she needs to go out we have to go out. And it's a really good reminder that like, Yeah, we should go for a walk. And I always feel better when I come back.

Brianna Ettley 17:10
I think I can agree with that. When we definitely we got a second dog because I was like I'm here. And I can do that. And it's it's been great. And they kind of sleep in my office during the day. And when

they're ready, we go for a walk. I love that idea. Shannon, one of my Hacks is I keep this shawl sort of scarf on my chair. And if I feel like I'm not dressed up enough for a meeting, I just wrap it up or if I'm cold, they just wrap it up. It's like my for every everything. When I'm on camera, if I need something, it's there, I always have something like that available.

Brianna Ettley 17:40
I definitely take afternoon walks just to get some some fresh air. But something that that I do, it was more so in the pandemic, but I would switch up my desk position a lot. Right now my desk is in the living room. So I think positioning it in different ways kind of just sets up what I'm looking at and my atmosphere a little bit differently. So makes it a little bit different locking into work when it's like five feet away.

Brianna Ettley 18:03
Listening to music, when I'm not on a meeting is I love that I love being able to just have that in the background. And it just kind of zone out on it. But it really helps me be more productive.

Shannon Abram 18:15
We're going to keep all of the men because that's already. I feel like you can't have too much great advice. What is your favorite dessert?

Brianna Ettley 18:25
knollys

Jim Storer 18:27
knollys love it.

Brianna Ettley 18:28
I would say creme brulee. And one two,

Jim Storer 18:31
very solid entrance. I love those. Both of those. What is your community superpower?

Brianna Ettley 18:37
Relationship building?

Brianna Ettley 18:38
Yeah, I would say yeah, probably respect and in transparency

Shannon Abram 18:44
are great superpowers. No wonder you guys won so many awards. It really was kind of the RFS array. We don't need to go into all of it. But it was just like it was a lot in a really wonderful A. So actually, this sort of is a great segue, who are what is your community inspiration?

Brianna Ettley 18:59

Do? You know I think we we research lots of different programs and communities when we're trying to decide how we want to change ours up. There's not just one out there that we look to. I think as far as inspiration that just comes from the I think Jack, our president and CEO of our company, you know, community as a whole is a big thing to him and our users and customers are really, really important to him. So we're kind of on the front line of working with those people and helping them do what they do. So I think that inspires us quite a bit. Yeah,

Brianna Ettley 19:31
I don't think I can I can top that. I would say Jack definitely amazing.

Jim Storer 19:35
Michelle Breanna, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today. This has been a lot of fun. And again, congratulations on the award. Thank you. Thanks

Brianna Ettley 19:44
for having us.

Brianna Ettley 19:45
Thanks for having us. Thank you both

Shannon Abram 20:00
Thanks for listening to another episode of community conversations with the Community Roundtable we'll see you next time