TRANSCRIPT – Community Conversations Episode #97

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SPEAKERS
Shannon Abram, Jim Storer, Chris Catania

Jim Storer 00:06
Hello, and welcome to another edition of community conversations. My name is Jim store, and I am co founder of the Community Roundtable. And I am here with my capable co host, Shannon Abram, Shannon. Hi,

Shannon Abram 00:20
Jim, we are so excited to be here today with a longtime friend of the Community Roundtable. And I didn't look it up and I should have multiple time podcast guest. I feel like Chris, you're on the podcast all the time. And I love that. Welcome back, Chris.

Chris Catania 00:34
Thank you. Yeah, I love being a guest. It's always it's always fun. I always enjoy it. This

Shannon Abram 00:39
is a little maybe inside baseball, Jim and I were prepping for this. And I was like, but you know what, it's Chris. Like, we don't have to do that much prep. Like he is like, great at this. And it's like, normally we do like a whole bunch of like, well, these are the questions we should ask and like this about them. And we're like, Well, we know him really well. And he's great at this. So this is gonna be a breeze.

Chris Catania 00:57
Awesome. Yeah, I love doing these podcasts and sharing and talking. So you guys are easy to talk to you. Oh,

Shannon Abram 01:01
well, thank you. So for those of those in our audience who don't know you, you should know, Chris, because can you take a minute to introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about where you work and the kind of community that you work with.

Chris Catania 01:13
I have been doing community building around 18 years and the last time I checked, and you know, I've really enjoyed it. And I work at ESRI been there about almost eight years and really had had a chance to build a community that kind of plateaued. And over the last 678 years, you know, we've really built a really strong program, strong team. And what we do, as we were the geospatial software market leader, for those of you who don't know what that is, essentially, it's using mapping location intelligence, and helping some of the biggest brands, biggest companies, industries in the world use the power of mapping and kind of the science of where, as we call it to help solve the world's biggest problems. So our community helps our customers who solve those big problems, connect, collaborate, share ideas, really build a real, bigger, deeper sense of belonging among their industry, they can kind of be lone wolves, where they work in the industry. So we we focus on now to not only allowing them to solve problems with they may encounter or used to use our software, better their work, but also connect them better as professionals, then also get ideas from them. And we get those ideas back into the product teams to our community just under 350,000 and growing members. And then you know, we have multi use case going on, we use our community for support deflection. And then also we have ideas, we use it for product innovation. And as I mentioned, it's also a blend of kind of community practice with our GIS professionals coming in. It's really fantastic. We have we have a great ESRI community team team of six that really helps bring all this to life. And they're fantastic. And you'll hear about them on a on another show or something for another another one vote. We have a great team, and we have increasing leadership support continues to grow with that we're excited.

Shannon Abram 02:53
I have to say as it has become sort of an Easter egg in my real life when anytime I see a map on the internet, I'm like, I look at the bottom and it says like powered by Azeri and I'm like, really? I'll be like to my husband, I'll be like I know them. They're a huge company. You don't know that? Like I do. I know

Chris Catania 03:11
them. Yeah, yeah, no, it's really fantastic. That's part of it. Because when I when I joined down here, I did not know anything about GIS. That's the stands for Geographic Information Systems. And that's something I knew I knew very little of, but I definitely have become a GIS champion. And I actually use a lot of GIS and geospatial thinking now in my community strategy, it's a part of what I how I think it's really opened up a lot of things. And yeah, every time I see a map now, too, I tell my family and my friends, and I explained to them. Oh, you know that? Did you see the COVID dashboard? You know, we're tracking the John Hopkins all the COVID cases during the pandemic happened as we that's an Esri product, you know, or did you? Did you know how, you know, UPS trucks, they don't make any left hand turns? You know that that's ESRI GIS? And do you know how, you know, Walgreens is other pharmacies and, you know, the government uses these things to track the different things. So it's really, it's really amazing. We're really proud to be able to build a community for such a powerful use and has a big impact on the world so that it really helps inspire us to build community for that type of customer and bigger mission, right?

Shannon Abram 04:15
I feel like we're going to need to have an entire additional podcast episode where you talk to me more about no left turns. Because we don't have time today, I want to focus on you and the essary team and

all the amazing things you do. But you kind of just blew my mind. So before we move on, what technology does the community run on?

Chris Catania 04:34
Yeah, we use chorus that's been our platform for the last three years. And we have other parts of our tech stack, if you're curious about that, but that's the main community platform is chorus. And that's what that's what we use. And we use chorus, community and chorus care, as well to run the actual community itself. But then we have a bunch of back end pieces RBI. We bring our community data out of the platform itself and then do a bunch of analysis. We have a bunch of plugins and tech that We deal with other product teams, I guess I could, we could probably have a whole other show just on our tech stack. But primarily, it's chorus.

Jim Storer 05:06
Well, we're gonna get into some of that with I think this next question, you're gonna get to talk a little bit about some of the analysis that you do, because your team recently won a Community Leadership Award at the latest connect conference. And the award was for outstanding community ROI, recognizing the amazing efforts that you guys have used on your team to demonstrate significant ROI for ESRI, and I'm just really interested to hear more about how you built that model and some of your results that you've seen.

Chris Catania 05:37
We're really honored to be awarded that it means it means a lot to me to our team, and especially to our organization. Because as we shared in the entry when we put that in, and when we we wanted to tell the story of it, it really is a story of a lot of the key partners across the company coming together to agree on a way to measure community. When I got to EZRI. I wasn't necessarily asked to measure ROI, full disclosure transparency, but as good committee professionals know you need to have that ready, you need to be able to measure things, should you get asked the question, or should the program be a little bit more under scrutiny, right. And you have to kind of show that so I was developing, I started doing it. And it did come in handy in in many different ways. And in what I want to do is I want to build an ROI model. And I kind of actually call it a cost impact model to be specific. And but it does eventually tie to ROI because we put in what it costs cost to run the platform and all kind of stuff. But what I started to do was build a build a model that helps us measure the bottom line past impact from a support deflection or augmenting our assistance support program at ESRI. So what I started to do is I started to take different models that I knew that are out there different models I've used in the past things that are kind of accepted in the industry to do this. So that could create that. So I started to do that I was working with corals, because some of what I was building was involved with some of their models. I use some of it from the roundtable from what we had had conversations in the past. And then I reached out to our support team, because I wanted to see what they were doing. Because I didn't want this model when I presented it to leadership and to other teams outside of our community to kind of not be taken seriously, I wanted to be something that they recognized. I did a little bit of research. And I talked with our support team who I knew had had a model for using support documentation deflection. And I adopted that has had a bunch of meetings, that she took about two years to really build the model that we're using today, because I had to take time to make the case for it, build it, have those conversations with stakeholders, but it was really worth it. Because you know, I

had a chance to vet this with with my boss who was our chief customer officer and make sure that as I was building it, I was sharing it with him so that when it when it was ready to share it broadly, everybody was aligned, because that's what you if you really want something accepted and adopted, you want that that leadership by and so over the course of a couple of years, year and a half, we built this, and it has pieces of what is accepted primarily for support deflection from support documentation deflection perspective. But we took all the metrics from community like views of accepted solutions are ideal platform, because they consider a shared idea is something that customers wouldn't have to call in for that. So basically took all that together, put it put it together, and it's what we use today. And every quarter, we report the cost impact with that we have infographics that we share out every quarter, we always share these numbers internally do not share them externally, it's really brought up some interesting questions too. And it's helped to actually be engaged other potentially skeptical non community champions within the company that may not fully understand or know how to productize that. So that's, that's kind of the whole short story of how this model came about, and how and how we use it today and why it's important, I would love to

Shannon Abram 08:38
hear more about, especially for anyone listening, who's jealous and striving for this, like jealous in a good way. When you say you went to talk to other stakeholders, I know as a huge organization, but which departments were really critical to you getting this going.

Chris Catania 08:53
Support for sure, I have developed partnerships with our support team. So we have a couple of individuals on our support team that I had been working with and other projects, but I know specifically who they were. So it was a support organization, both that team and then our our product teams, because our integration use case was part of that was part of the model. So and then also I reached out to our data analytics team who's helping us build the dashboards and things in Power BI, you know, I have so we have we have stakeholders that we work with on the coral side, that helped to vet some things on that. And then I have my boss who I mentioned earlier, our Chief Customer Officer kind of working through and I actually presented kind of different versions of this, that more as a recommendation because you know, anytime you're engaging with leadership, you want to give them options, you know, and you say, that's the way I like to work is like giving kind of, hey, this is what I would this is my recommendation. But here's kind of a little bit bigger picture of that. So there's actually four different versions. And I had a story for each of those why I didn't want to choose three of those, but one of them was my recommendation. And I had already talked When I went through my leadership, I said, Well, my partner in support, we're aligned on this, this is what we believe is good. So this mixture leadership, our support team, we reached out to our product teams, because of that close tie between a submitted idea, we consider that something that customers who submitted idea, then they wouldn't have to call into support to share that feature enhancement for the products of that part. So it was support products. And then our our leadership team and our in our analytics data team that was helping us

Jim Storer 10:26
we just closed a survey we did around community careers and compensation. And, you know, one of the areas that I see more and more community teams bringing this resource in house, and I'm just

wondering, given all of your work with Power BI and crunching data, is the analyst or like the community data analysts, is that someone that resides in your team? Are you using a shared resource elsewhere in the organization?

Chris Catania 10:50
Yeah, yeah. Great, great question. So it's been interesting. You know, as I've been building our team and our community organization, I've had to borrow resources from other teams. And that's been part of the journey. But when I got to the point where I could hire community Operations Manager, my vision for that role was to oversee, you know, maintaining the site, maintaining business integrations, and then data analytics, that role is a liaison. But before that was happening, I was leveraging, we have a, we have a data analytics team that is nested within our team that we all report to our chief customer officer. So I was borrowing resources at that point, but now we're at a point. And then also, taking what we know of our community analytics coming out a chorus, that operations role was overseeing analytics. So now, I combined the relationship that we had with the analytics team. And now our operations manager, she works with that team. And then we all know she's, she's overseeing it. But we're, we are now part of that regular flow of that analytics team. So we're leveraging their resources, but part of their percentage of their work involves helping helping our community team, we're planning to expand our community team, so that we can have a specific analytics role that will be nested underneath our operations manager to do that. So that's because we know now we built up, we've shown what we can do, we've shown all the analytics in the power of being able to show the community with that, and that's what I've done over time is kind of showing what we could do if we had an extra role, and then show the power of it. And then we get kind of get approval for to grow up the methodology, I've used to do that. So today, it's part of our analytics team that we've always had with that partnership. And but now we have a role. And then we're going to add a new role to really focus on analytics, because we're building out a retention model that I want to build to do that, and a whole bunch of other analytic models. And then we're, we're making our analytics more accessible to stakeholders, and kind of like a phase two, which is coming out of phase one with our internal Power BI dashboards getting launched. And then we want to make data more accessible to our leadership team, and then to our stakeholders, who are not in a leadership role. So now it's it started out with barring some resources from from another team. Now we now we have our own resources and building that, but we still maintain that, that access. And then we had to go, you know, outside of these partnerships I was talking about to other teams who didn't who didn't know kind of what we were doing with community analytics, merging it with business analytics. So it's really an ongoing education process. But it's always, it's always great because it gives us a chance to build a relationship, you know, with our sales team who's like, Why do you have access to sales data. And I was like, let me tell you, because we're trying to build community, show the top line revenue. Now now we've shown the bottom line revenue with the sales and the cost savings. Now I want to I want to connect the business data with community data. So we can show the top line revenue, and begin to do that. So it's just you just do it, we're just build on these relationships, get enough going, and then borrow some resources to start and then make the case to get our own nested official resources, and then just keep going wider and going deeper into the into the company. It's

Jim Storer 13:57

fascinating. I was going to ask you what process you went through to secure those resources or the time for those resources to focus on community data. But you answered my question there. But I do want to just pause for a second and make sure to highlight something you said that you said pretty quickly. And as listeners, you know, maybe you're multitasking as they're listening to this podcast. They may have missed it. But it's a critical critical idea or concept that we see great community teams doing on a regular basis. And that's education, evangelizing if it's not something that you're constantly thinking about within your community plan. You're making a mistake. Ultimately, we see so many community teams and the ones that the vast majority of the ones that are getting awards are the ones that are doing a great job keeping the organization and this is not just a lunch and learn once a year. This is constantly making sure the right areas of the business understand how community is impacting what they do, how they do it and how success That's all they are. And so I just wanted to take a second, there's not really necessarily a whole lot for you to respond to here, Chris, although, you know, you could tell me if this is something that you think about regularly, but education and evangelism is so important to community building.

Chris Catania 15:15
Yeah, can you get, we could have a whole nother podcast episode about that I'm very passionate about that. It's actually one of the things I've really, really loved about what I do is, is the opportunity to talk to, you know, leaders and stakeholders, who may be community curious or know enough about it, to have a conversation with me. But once once we get to talking, and I initiate that conversation, because I see an opportunity to serve them with the power of community, and with our, you know, with our online experience with the community, so you're spot on, you know, it's like, you can't not be doing that in some way, or fashion evangelism education, I probably do it so much, I, it's just what I do. But I learned on early in my career, how important that was. Because, you know, you can have those elevator conversations, you can have those like five or 10 minutes you have with an executive, you know, when you get that chance, right, quote, unquote, but man is it's so much easier when you're consistently building those relationships, going and talking to people. Just let me know who you are, what you do, what your team does, and how it helps them. I learned early on that you have to what I call shared value, explaining that to them. So that's, that's a big part of the education and evangelism process you're talking about, you know, is going to teams and saying, hey, you know, this ain't about the community being successful. It's about you, and your team being successful. And when I started to do that, some teams, they, like their eyes open, and they're like, What do you mean? I said, Well, what are your goals? And like, What are you talking about? What do you mean, he's amazing what we want to use it to help help you What do you tell me your goals? Once it once you get past that first like shock of like me asking, asking them what's important to them? And not, you know, it's not like, I'm gonna try and get anything we can ask, we got some really good conversations. But it is hard, right? I remember when I was a person on a team of one, early in my career, and I didn't understand that I didn't understand like, you had to go out and figure out what the needs of the business are, what the language of that business area is, and adopt that little bit, learn their language, you know, it's like, you go into foreign country, and you have to learn the culture, you have to learn the language, if the wind what's important to them. So when you step into that environment, you can achieve the goal.

Jim Storer 17:17

I love the foreign language analog, because executives want to come across as smart. And I think one of the things that gives them pause about community is they don't really understand it. And so getting together with them, and helping executives become smart about community, they don't need to be able to engage, they don't need to be able to, I mean, it's helpful if they do, but that's not in their critical path. But if you can get them comfortable enough that they can speak the language of community, then you've won. And I think when you're talking about education, you're talking about evangelism, specifically within the executive ranks. It's getting them to a point where they're comfortable talking with other people about how community works, and how it's helping the company. Yeah,

Chris Catania 18:03
absolutely. That's a that's a great point. And it, you reminded me of a point I didn't bring up, which I think is really important, because you can't be in the room all the time yourself, right? So you have to go into when you're talking with and there's so many different levels and flavors of leader of stakeholder, I think that's important to point out is that there's, you know, there's the C suite, you know, there's the VP, there's stakeholders that you may interact with, you know, at your peer level. So there's different, there's different levels. And there's very important nuances at that at those different levels, the needs expectations, what you need to say, changes with each person changes with each level of the organization. So think that's really important. So for example, if you're talking to a leader, who's in the C suite, perhaps, you know, you may not be able to be in the meetings or all that time. So you have to you have to educate them, almost in a reverse mentoring approach. And you have to explain things so that they can almost be you, or speak your mission, you know, in that and then if you go to that next level, which is when what you're trying to accomplish becomes important to them. And then they actually talk like you are speak like you meaning they're speaking passionately about community and how it can help that part of the business. That's kind of like the ultimate level what I consider like you, you can be confident when you're not in the room, that community and the goals of that are going to be articulated well with that, that takes time to develop it. But I think that that's always been my approach. I use different things. And again, when I stopped using the word community in most situations, and I just use what was important to them, and I then talked about community when it was appropriate. And again, we could we get a whole nother podcast episode just about that. Like how do you talk about community without talking about it so you can accomplish what you need to accomplish. But those conversations with leaders and getting them to be your champion when you're not in the room. is so so critical.

Jim Storer 19:58
Chris, I'd love to ask you about advice you have for a community professional looking to start just start calculating ROI for their community, what are some of the first steps you recommend they jump in with?

Chris Catania 20:11
It starts with mindset, you know, not to be afraid of data, not to be afraid of the numbers, you know, I can I can say that firsthand, you know, I am not a numbers person, I've become one. And I've been a huge fan of data, I've seen the power of it. So I think just being comfortable with it learning absorbing as much as you can about data. But when I say data, I think, you know, there's, that has to be defined to you. But basically, what I mean is that, you know, seeing how numbers looking at financials, you know, looking at what, how do you determine ROI, like in our actual art, the basic ROI calculations cost

impact, like, what does that mean, because it can be kind of scary to most community professionals, because you're, we're operating in, you know, conversations, a lot of soft skills, a lot of ROI takes a lot of some of the math, some of the analytics, you're using the left side of your brain. So I think the mindset first part, just get comfortable with it and realize that all the things that you want to do, and you all the great things that community can do, a lot of this needs to be defined and can be furthered if you understand that. So just use that to overcome some fears, if you have fear of, you know, working with numbers, but the other thing you could do is you could leverage other people, I've learned how to do that, you know, and say, Oh, I understand this, conceptually, I have a vision for it. I can only get so far in myself. So learn how to leverage other resources, learn how to, you know, understand some of the basics, but make those partnerships, get other people excited about it, so that they can help you with that, try and get you know, we're working all the numbers. The second part is I would, I would say, you know, just understand, you know, what, begin to do, do some research, do some good listening across your organization, find out what is important, is it showing bottom line cost savings, obviously, those are always important to business, don't know what business is not looking at saving money and making money. So it's important to find out what pieces of data are important, because there's different ways to look at ROI. Different leaders measure that differently. If you're in the marketing team, that's a different conversation than if you're looking at support, right? So just understand and do do some listening, and then understand the technologies that you do have, I had a lot of great conversations with corals, and figuring out kind of what their models were with that, like I said, I had good conversations with our stakeholders, I spent a good amount of time researching and kind of building this up, I also had a good conversation with our leadership. And I said, Well, I'm thinking about doing this. Is this important? You know, it was kind of a loaded question. But I did, I did some research, and they didn't know they were being interviewed. But they were with that. And then once you've done all that, and this, this could take some time, like I said, it took about two years or so to build the model, we actually have bits and pieces, I've been building that trust, building those relationships, doing research on my own, following these things. And then everything that all of this involves is experimentation, every stakeholder that I was building with, I said, we're going to test this out, we're going to experiment, you know, this is a draft, you know, just give give, give yourself some opportunity to say that, hey, we're going to feel this out, you know, and make that opportunity to partner with people how we're going to collaborate in this video may become messy over here, we're going to see how the data model would have kicks out and you know what that works. But just give yourself some time to experiment and have a goal of what you want to do you want to focus on cost savings, do you want to focus on top line revenue, do you what you want to do, but give yourself some space to experiment, and include those stakeholders at the right time. Obviously, you don't want to show all the sausage making to a leadership audience. But when I was working with more of my other partners in the support organization, we were really roll up our sleeves, there was a lot of like us going in going through that and experimentation. But just give yourself some time, you know, to figure that out. But definitely set you know, set a goal set something that you set it as a yearly goal by the end of the year, you want to have this model built. And then you want to be able to test that. And then have an idea of what you want to do with that. Like, do you want to use that to get more resources? Do you want to use that to show a stakeholder Hey, we can we can do this for you if we do that, because I've I use the ROI model, not just to say, hey, we can show how much we're saving. But I had a plan to use that. I wanted to get us on a better platform at one point like I was using that to to build the team or you know, to do different things. So have a plan of what you

want to do with that. But give yourself some time to experiment. Listen, do all those things it takes time. To do that.

Jim Storer 24:29
I'll just give a quick plug for the community roundtables, ROI model which if one of your key behaviors within your community is getting questions answered, then that model might be for you. We I was thinking about how long ago we developed it. It's eight or nine years ago that we were doing a lot of work with clients that one of the key behaviors was questions and answers within their community. And so we built this model and it's relatively straightforward the one real there variable in there is what's the value of an answer? And what I found and using that model, echoing what you were just just sharing is that it has it initiates these really interesting conversations about how the organization values, answers. Because once you can get to that number, you can just go to the back end of your system and get all the other data and it'll turn out an ROI for you. So it's a relatively simple and straightforward model. I think for a lot of organizations, they want to dig a little bit deeper, and I'm sure that's from the sounds of what you've done. But it is, it can be a good way to get started. So I'll throw that out there. And I think Shannon's gonna kind of follow up question for you. Yeah,

Chris Catania 25:44
I want to add on real quick, if that's all right, to what you were saying, Jim, I think it's real important, our costs impact model. And I think this is true for any model that you're going to build. I don't wanna say it's loose, but it can be a conversation starter with that. And I think that I've always approached our our modeling with that, because there's a lot of data that's going into this, that you're not certain on some of that some of the data you're feeding into it. But it's enough where everybody can agree that this is roughly the way I describe our model is that this is a conservative, approach, conservative, you know, output of what our community delivers as far as value to the organization, probably a lot higher, in some cases, but it's a loose model. But it helps us give a sense of that. And the other thing that I mentioned, too, is that this is how I use the the mission vision values of our company to drive home a point about the community value, and like, why do we need to do this, because we didn't have an ROI model. And we weren't very data driven with our community when I got here, but we're a very data driven company. And we challenge our customers to do that, too, you know, with with maps and data and all kinds of stuff. So it's like, we're building a model, because we're coming you centric, can be first company, but we need to be data driven with that. So I use that, again, as a way to kind of reinforce why it was happening. And I attached this whole idea to the mission vision of the company. Again, it's all your kind of latching into all these different things to little by little you build this case of like this is all pointed towards something of the bigger, bigger mission. And I found that to be very valuable. Not just that it's not something that these are all these one offs, communities out over here, but as much as you can, whether it's ROI model, programming, you know, just you're attaching it to the mission and vision of the of the company in that in that way. And I found that to be very influential and critical on getting buy in and building this out.

Shannon Abram 27:35
That's such good advice. And it is interesting to think so holistically about. I mean, this conversation started with ROI. But really, it's not just like, well, we built a model, and we calculated it, there's just so many other things that go into having sort of a whole view of what's going on and making it matter.

That's definitely my biggest question is we've been watching the work you do it as we for so long. For those of you in the audience, we are recording this near the end of 2023. What's next for your team? I mean, you said you want to bring on an analyst, which is amazing. And again, jealousy inducing problems for some people. But what do you guys have on your roadmap for 2020? For our

Chris Catania 28:13
roadmap, a lot of is growth. And what I mean by that is that 2023 was a lot of launching new, new things, you know, we're launching our I call it our community analytics portfolio, which is this portfolio of our Power BI, looking at our retention model, meaning business model that we use to measure when somebody joins, what's the percentage quarter to quarter that so we're so we're building all of these out in 2024, because we launched them in 2023. So growth is a big part of that. We're looking at being more geospatial in our analytics, we took steps to do that, again, I I'm a huge fan of making sure that we're using our own technology. And I think other community builders can be professionals can also get on this bandwagon, too. I think it's really important. It's very under underutilized and that there's a ton potential and in seeing your community data through geospatial lens, we could have a whole whole nother episode about about that. But that's just that's what we're doing this year is that we're we're continuing to use our own ESRI software geospatial software to gain insights and enhance and drive our community strategy. And that's super exciting to me. We're using tools like our Knowledge Graph, we're looking at how do we understand the network connections that deep network connections within our community? What does that mean for our MVP program? What does that mean for different parts of that? So so I'm excited about that. And you know, we're continuing to do do storytelling. That's a huge part of actually connected to the to the ROI piece as well. In some cases, AI is a big is a big part of what we're doing partnering with our support team primarily. But AI is a big part of like, how do we use AI within our community? How do we take community data and feed it into other AI projects across the company? So we're looking at if that's and growing are international. I mean, we have just a good, good, good, good, solid roadmap for this year. But those are, those are some of the big ones. You know, AI is on there, the geospatial components growing.

Jim Storer 30:13
Everyone's talking about AI, Chris, everyone's talking about, yeah, it's kind of right. bolt that on to community or feed community data into there. So it's gonna be really interesting to see where bunch of our clients are taking AI. So we'll be sure to report back on that. As a past participant on this podcast. This should be a layup for you, but we'd like to go to the speed round. And I'm gonna start it off with Team dog or Team Cat.

Chris Catania 30:42
You have a team allergic to pets. That's the team are beyond. So I'm on Team bearded dragon, because that's what we have. Wow, Team goldfish, if that's all right, but if I wasn't allergic to pets, I probably get a dog. Okay, because I love Yeah, well, I love dogs. But yeah, no, no pets in our house to have

Jim Storer 30:59
Shannon she NMDC the bearded dragon. I've tried to convince her. False

Shannon Abram 31:03

I do not. We had two lizards. Both of them sadly passed away this year. Oh, Blizzard age. Well, they were leopard geckos, and they don't live as long as Do you. This is a serious question. Dress your bearded dragon up. Because the internet really wants to show me pictures of bearded dragons wearing like hats and costumes. They the algorithm is convinced like, yes,

Chris Catania 31:25

we do. We do. Yeah, we have one that has like a wings and Oh, yeah.

Shannon Abram 31:30

send us pictures to include them with this.

Jim Storer 31:32

Yeah, that'd be good.

Shannon Abram 31:34

Yes. So the second question is, what do you binging right now? Like food wise, or

Chris Catania 31:40

like, what am I watching? Like,

Shannon Abram 31:41

what you can ask the question, however you look.

Chris Catania 31:43

Well, binging? I would say, can't wait for the next season. But the bear the show that's on I think it's on Hulu or whatever. But

Jim Storer 31:50

I love the Bear Bear.

Chris Catania 31:52

Yeah, I'm a Chicago guy. So Oh, right. And I was I was, if I wasn't going to community, probably I was going to be a chef. At one point. I love the kitchen, I cook, I'm always trying to learn new dishes that shows that show is amazing. I think it captures there's not a lot of shows, sometimes it capture the essence of the Midwest bustle of Chicago. And that that one that does it really well. And it's in a kitchen. And it's just fantastic. And I love I love that show.

Jim Storer 32:20

I think one of the things that they did even when they're not, the scene is not in a kitchen. They were able to capture the frenetic nature of online during a rush. And you just feel like you're there. So I agree. Yeah,

Chris Catania 32:38

yeah, I was in the restaurant industry for like six years as a bartender and waiter, and I missed that I missed that part. My wife will watch me watch the show. And she's like, well, you like what you love about this? She says, you know, because I was never a big fan of the of the Gilmore Girls. But she's like, this is like, Gilmore Girls in a kitchen. Yeah. And like, What do you mean by that? But nothing

Shannon Abram 32:59
anyone has ever said made me interested in the bear until you said that? Because I love the Gilmore Girls. I

Chris Catania 33:07
was like, What do you mean by that?

Shannon Abram 33:08
I'm gonna check it out. Now,

Chris Catania 33:09
because of the language it was everybody's like, chopping on each other, like every like the there's no space between. Between the beyond, there's no beats. And when you're working on screenplays, there's beats like there's a moment where you're waiting. And there's just like, on top of each other the whole time with the dialogue, but that's how it is in a kitchen. You know, and there's there's a set agenda, frenetic nature of that. So it's great show.

Jim Storer 33:31
The next question is about your favorite work from home hack. Now there were, some of us are going back to the office, but a lot of us are still working at home.

Chris Catania 33:42
Yeah, work from home. Heck, yeah, I think you know, I always try to keep my body in good, good, good flow. I don't like to be sitting for too long. I don't have to. So I have various things that I do. I keep egg weights, you know, to kind of keep my arms arms loose, often when I might stand up and do feel like some like shadowboxing or something like that, or I have Indian Clubs. And if you guys know what those are, but they're baits that they look like bowling pins, I have those I kind of, I'll stand up and do do some rounds of those. I just feel it gets your blood flowing and gets things moving around. So you're not sitting down too long with that. One other thing I can confidently

Jim Storer 34:13
say that we have never heard the phrase Indian Clubs on this podcast.

Shannon Abram 34:18
But I've also never heard of egg whites. And I'm Carly Googling them and they're going on My holiday wish list. Yeah, they're really good. I've never heard of such a thing, but I love it. Yeah,

Chris Catania 34:28

those are favorites. I have my journal. I always keep a journal next to me. I have thoughts you know. So those are those are things that work, you know, work from home. That's important. I don't I don't bring the egg weights and I don't bring because I do I do a hybrid work situation. So I don't bring the egg weights and the Indian Clubs work. So I have I have a home office that I use when I'm hybrid working in egg weights and the Indian Clubs tend tend to work better, you know, someone's walking by my office. I just didn't think that would be good for them to see me doing that. But anyways, you got to keep your body fresh. flowing during the day. You don't have to sit for too long.

Shannon Abram 35:02
I'm gonna circle us back to the bear. What's your favorite dessert?

Chris Catania 35:07
cannolis Oh,

Shannon Abram 35:09
great answer.

Chris Catania 35:10
I learned this like things growing up. You know, I had a Sicilian grandma, and she makes a noise and pistachios on the end. If you're guessing what those are the green, green nuts. And I thought all cannolis growing up high pistachios on the end, so I went to restaurants and I said, I'll have a cannoli for dessert and the guts of my plate. I'm like, what? This thing's delicate chips. Like what's why chocolate milk chocolate chips on the end? Like, where's the green pistachios? Yeah, so. And then I realized when I moved from Chicago to California, that that was really not only a grandma katanya thing, but it was also a Midwestern thing, I believe, to a certain extent, I guess I was told because I'm like, no matter what restaurant I go, and I never saw any desperate cannolis and come

Shannon Abram 35:55
to Boston, man, come to Boston. I like going deep. I have a Sicilian grandpa. Well, I mean, it did. He'd be like, 110 if he was still alive. Were related in the old country. It's very exciting. Maybe? Yeah, maybe maybe. All right, next question. What is your community superpower?

Chris Catania 36:16
My community superpower is strategy, vision and kind of seeing out into the future. And we were talking earlier, I love talking with stakeholders having conversations. And I will say storytelling, too. I've tried to vote specifically, when we were growing our team, I wanted to hire team members who understood the power of story. Because I love I love story. And I feel that story is very important to getting buy in and going back to ROI, like getting ROI, showing ROI can be telling a great story arc, I love storytelling, putting all those together. Because when you're in a stakeholder conversation, if you can tell a good story, front to back real quick, real concise, and visual, then you just increase your chances of getting that by and showing that, that demonstrating ROI through through the power of story. So storytelling strategy, getting people excited, I've been told that your vision guy, Chris, there, you can do that. And I'm like, yeah, cool, you know, so I think those are my, those are my superpowers. I love those those, those come pretty natural. My

Jim Storer 37:16
inner podcaster is telling me that that is the perfect story arc that you brought it back around to ROI. And we should end the podcast here. But I'm also a slave to these responses. And I want to make sure that folks out there, hear what your community inspiration is your who or what inspires you every day for community.

Chris Catania 37:39
Yeah, I think it I mean, it goes back to my origin story. I'm currently and this is a plug here. But I'm currently working on my first book. And as I'm writing that, I had to go back to my origin story of why community meant so much to me, and kind of what got me started on this whole thing like 20 years ago, and I went back and I was like, it's within the concert experience. And I started this concert community called Life fix. And then my wife and I created a podcast, and out of that, you know, I felt such a strong sense of community and belonging with concert fans, I wanted to know, were they thinking the same thing as I was, was I doing you know, was it just me? So I started connecting people, you know, I started this podcast, and and then I was like, Man, I want to be able to take what I'm feeling here and put it into context of business, my career starts to develop, I was working at an agency, and then I started to go, Okay, well, man, the brands need to do this or like, as a customer, I wanted to be able to experience this in the marketplace experience and all that kind of stuff. So for me, What inspires me is always to go back to that first moment that I had, and then watch how that's developed. And anytime I watch a concert film, or, you know, I see fancies going crazy at you know, Taylor Swift concert, or Drake concert, or whatever it is, or watching DVDs of the band in the 70s wooing people at their final concert, I go back to that, and then that's me, like, that's, that's always when I'm in a meeting or something like that. Or I'm like, Man, that's what we're trying to do. And then taking that, that feeling and putting that into context of business, and enabling an organization to integrate that into how they interact with their customers, and interact with their staff. And really tap into that. And then take what I felt that a concert connected with my fellow concert fans and put that in the context of a business. So if you

Jim Storer 39:29
can do that, you're going to get ROI. Yeah, that's when we bring it all back around. Great. Absolutely.

Chris Catania 39:38
Yes. I mean, that's, that's what inspires me. I mean, that's I spent a lot of time doing that. But I've had some good time to reflect on as I'm, as I'm working on the book and kind of figuring out because I didn't I didn't know I was like, What's my origin story? So I go back to this concert way back in 2007 or so in a cycle. That's where it started. So I think that's

Shannon Abram 39:57
amazing. I wish we could license Some of the music from The Last Waltz, but we're not going to get there for budgetary reasons, but I love. I love the callback. I really like copyright. I like the reference. But Chris, this has been so delightful. I love chatting with you. I hope you have a great end of your year and where you're so excited to check in with you in 2024.

Jim Storer 40:17
Thank you, Chris. So watch. Yeah, thank

Chris Catania 40:19
you. It's been fun

Shannon Abram 40:32
thanks for listening to another episode of community conversations with the Community Roundtable. We'll see you next time.