



Building Your Customer Community **An Overview of Best Practices**

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Welcome!

You have joined the social media revolution and are joining us on the journey to valuable customer insights. We're excited to have you as a new customer of Networked Insights. Your new Customer Interaction Network (CIN) will serve as your online community and will provide your company with an innovative way to:

- bring your customers together
- engage and stimulate interactions among passionate consumers
- identify your most influential customers and stay engaged with what they are saying, how they are saying it, and to whom
- generate actionable real-time Customer Intelligence based on the level of engagement between your customers and between you and your customers

Goals of these Guidelines

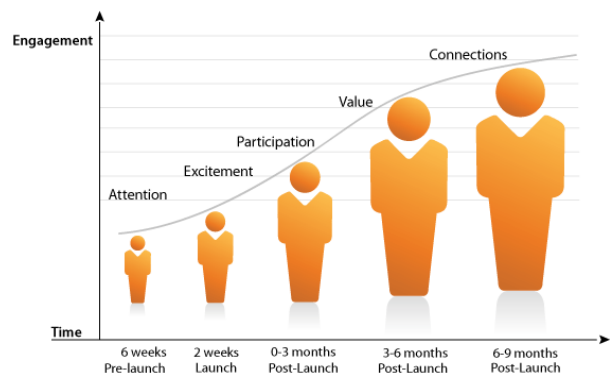
We have created this document to serve as a road map to help launch and develop your community successfully. To accomplish this, we:

1. identify **marketing approaches** to spur lively member interactions – maximizing member engagement in your community will make certain you realize the greatest benefit from your Networked Insights solutions
2. bring together proven **best practices** for planning, launching, and growing online communities
3. share **innovative ideas** we have used to successfully build community interaction

Networked Insights is committed to helping you make the most of your Networked Insights solutions. Whether it's arming your people with an effective marketing plan to build your community, or designing a tailored solution which we execute on your behalf, you will have Networked Insights' expertise behind you every step of the way.

The Community Building Process

In order to ensure your community thrives and delivers actionable insights, we have established a proven plan around 5 stages to successfully launch, build, and maintain your community



Attention	Excitement	Participation	Value	Connections
6 Weeks	2 Weeks	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months

In order to guide your community and achieve a smooth and timely launch, several goals must be met right out of the gate:

1. Forming an enthusiastic team to steer your community¹

- Set community objectives
 - Decide what insights your company is seeking and which needs the community will address
 - Determine your community's target member base
 - Decide what primary objective and style best suits your community
- Set goals and metrics to measure community vitality
 - Registered users
 - Discussions
 - Interaction levels
 - Engagement
- Determine team responsibilities and processes
 - Community manager
 - Technical lead
 - Marketing staff
 - Content creators
- Seed your community with initial content – have threads in the community prior to launch so new users can easily jump right in

2. Generating buzz to drive community membership and participation

Before the community launches, the marketing emphasis should be on establishing relationships with key influencers – these are the people who will send traffic to your community and may participate as experts in the community themselves

- Identify at least two dozen relevant online communities, blogs, and columnists that most influence target community members (remember there are over 30 million English speaking blogs, so pick wisely) – participate on their sites to establish a relationship and accumulate content ideas... remember, size is not indicative of how relevant it is
- Engage key influencers and invite them to become charter community members, so that the community will have enthusiastic users and advocates right away
- Create accounts at major social networking sites to promote your community and to use as a platform to announce the launch

¹ May be an internal team, or Networked Insights can provide these services.

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The key to a successful launch is to build excitement not only in existing customers but also with those members of *other* communities who will also participate in your community. While existing media can reach current customers, you will need to lean on the relationships established in the pre-launch phase to reach other community members.

During the Launch stage, you will use the relationships established in the pre-launch phase to reach other community members to:

1. Drive traffic to the community

- Create an event by hosting a launch party (could be a “virtual” launch party)
- Drive online prospects to the community by announcing the launch in those relevant online communities, blogs, and media sites you established a profile on
- Create dedicated messages in offline media and/or incorporate the community launch message into existing offline communications to drive current customers to the community
- Time the community launch to coincide with another high-profile event/time to capitalize on a time where there is already significant interest and buzz for the product/brand

2. Get visitors to register with the community

- Send notification email to people who signed up on the preview page during pre-launch
- Invite influencers to become charter community members
- Use incentives to get visitors to register with the community

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After the excitement of the launch wears off, motivate existing community members to stay active in the community. Additionally, continue your external communications to keep driving new users to the community. Marketing should focus on:

1. Getting registered members to participate in the community

- Make sure active membership has benefits – use incentives to keep members participating in the community
- Closely monitor your community, get ideas for new content from users, and develop quality content to keep members coming back for more

2. Getting more new members

- Incorporate messages about the community into ongoing email communications to non-members

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After several months, members should be driving most of the content in the community. The focus continues to be on getting more new users and to that end marketing can demonstrate the value of the community to potential members by integrating community content through the rest of the site. The goals at this stage are to:

1. Continue to acquire new users

- Celebrate the community's six-month anniversary by re-launching the community, repeating some of the successful techniques from the initial launch

2. Keep current members engaged

- Give users the opportunity to be community celebrities by rewarding and publicizing top posters

3. Incorporate user-generated content into other media

- Add content to the rest of the website to demonstrate the relevancy and value of membership and provide another link to the community; these pages can also be submitted to other online communities

4. Make a splash in the online world

- Create content members will want to share, send to friends, and embed in their other online profiles

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As the community grows, your best marketing tool will be your members. The connections members make with each other is what will give the community stickiness. The goals at this stage are to:

1. Empower your members to make genuine connections with each other

- Create member events or “members-only” areas at existing company events, and encourage members to report back to the community – connections made offline will reinforce the importance of the community to members

2. Make stronger connections with members

- Issue community members credentials to company events, and encourage members to report back to the community and/or their own sites/networks

3. Reactivate lapsed members

- Send a dedicated email to lapsed members highlighting the best of the community and encouraging their return

This document has been condensed and presents a sampling of our community-building best practices manual. Our clients receive a greatly expanded version which is packed with nearly 20 pages of proven tactics.

For each stage, our full manual...

1. provides a summary with the **guiding principle** and **main objectives**
 - all community-building activities should revolve around these core ideas

Stage 1: Pre-launch
The Pre-launch stage comprises the six weeks leading up to launch, and revolves around...

Building Attention
to address 2 main objectives:

1. Forming an enthusiastic team to ensure your community
2. Generating buzz to drive community membership and participation

1. Forming an enthusiastic team to steer your community¹
In order to guide your community and achieve a smooth and timely launch, several goals must be met right out of the gate:

- Establish a community management team and plan – this can be one person, a whole group, or you may elect to have Networked Insights serve these needs
- Seed your community with initial content – have threads in the community prior to launch so new users can easily jump right in

2. Generating buzz to drive community membership and participation

- Before the community launches, the marketing emphasis should be on establishing relationships with key influencers – these are the people who will send traffic to your community and may participate as experts in the community themselves

¹ May be an external team, or Networked Insights can provide these services.
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Then we...

2. reiterate the **core idea**, outline **specific marketing tactics**, and provide **several examples**
 - checkboxes and icons will help you track progress and responsibilities of team members

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2. Getting more new members

- Incorporate messages about the community into ongoing email communications to non-members
 - Dedicate a regular space in emails for community news
 - Insert content excerpts from latest posts or most popular conversations
 - Offer incentives to join: promotional products, merchandise/shipping discounts, contests, points (could be something new or part of an existing points/loyalty/rewards system)
- Add community-oriented messages to your main site & other online communications – establish a consistent place on the site for community content so visitors will always be exposed to latest and greatest the community has to offer
 - Latest news in the community
 - Excerpts from the latest posts
 - Upcoming events
 - Add community message to employee email signatures
- Place Networked Insights' widgets on your web site to drive traffic the community and convert site visitors into community members
 - Widgets will grab people's attention and give a hint of community content
 - We have several types of widgets which focus on discussions, posts, and members activity
 - Place widgets with general content on main web page
 - Place widgets with focused content on product pages
 - Widgets are automatically updated as community content evolves

Again, welcome to a new era in social networking and Customer Intelligence! By implementing an effective marketing plan to make the most of your Networked Insights solutions, we are confident your online community can become a thriving and valuable part of your business.