

Time Per Tactic

A Guide to Online Community Management

Are you new to online community management and struggling to understand the concept of "engagement"?

Do you wonder how much time different tactics require to help your online community thrive?

In this guide, we'll explore the various tactics you can employ to foster engagement and provide estimations of the time needed for each.

Whether you're running a small community or managing a large group, understanding the time per tactic can help you create an effective action plan.

Implementing Effective Community Management Techniques

Effective community management is crucial for success. Consider the role of a community manager and the time they should spend on various tasks to maintain a thriving community.

Time required will vary depending on the type of community, the platform it is hosted on, the size of the membership and the number of community managers. Having an understanding of how much time you will have to look after the community will help you identify the realistic types of activities that you can do to support the community.



Based on research conducted as part of a project with English Heritage to build an online community of practice review toolkit, we noted that the communities we worked with spent different amounts of time with their communities based on the tool used.

- Facebook - 30 hours a week
- Email list - 11 hours a week
- Knowledge Hub - 4 hours a week (based on previous research)

We all know that engagement is a key factor in a thriving community, and community managers need to employ various tactics to foster engagement and participation. The time spent on different tactics and their frequency can significantly impact the community's success. Understanding the time and resource requirements for these tactics is essential for creating a successful community management plan tailored to the community's size, purpose, and objectives.

Discussions

Discussions form the lifeblood of any community, fuelling its vitality and fostering a sense of belonging among members. They serve as the pulse that keeps the community active, inviting members to participate, share their thoughts, and connect with others.

To harness discussions for maximum engagement, diversity in topics is key. Through offering a wide array of approaches and drawing in different perspectives, ensures that there's something for everyone while fostering a place where everyone feels heard and valued.

By continuously nurturing discussions, sharing quality content, and seeking input from the group, a thriving community can be cultivated, ensuring members are not only drawn in but inspired to keep coming back to participate.



Discussions

Here are a few suggestions on how to use discussions to encourage engagement.

Knowledgehub



INTRODUCTION FORUMS

Setting up a welcome/introductions discussion and maintaining it on an ongoing basis is a simple technique, which acts as an icebreaker to help members become familiar with the community, see who's who and how easy it is to take part.

AVERAGE TIME 15 MINS
USED 2-3 TIMES PER MONTH

Knowledgehub



THEMED DISCUSSIONS

It can be useful to set up discussions based on popular themes, particularly if they are current hot topics, as these can generate good engagement.

AVERAGE TIME 30 MINS
USED ONCE PER MONTH

Knowledgehub




QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Start your discussion with a simple question for members to answer. It's a good idea to make the question clear and specific to encourage focused answers. Some of the most active discussions can be ones that are asking for help or seeking advice.

AVERAGE TIME 15 MINS
USED ONCE PER MONTH

Knowledgehub




REQUESTS FOR HELP

If you have received a particularly interesting question from elsewhere, why not crowdsource it by sharing it with the community and asking for help from the members?

AVERAGE TIME 15 MINS
USED ONCE PER MONTH

Knowledgehub



ASK ME ANYTHING

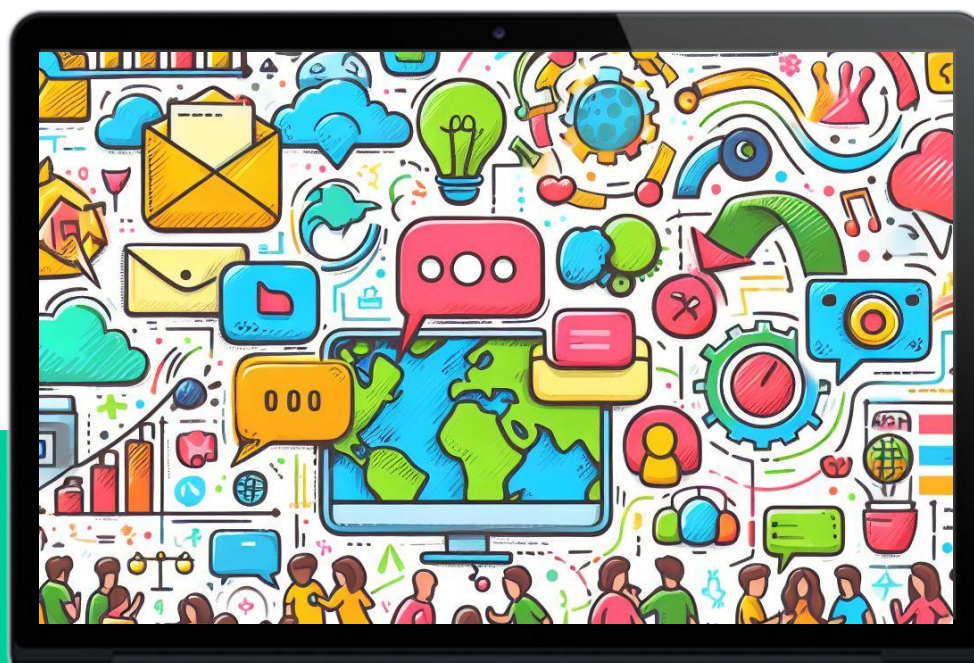
An "Ask me anything" or "AMA" is a regular event where members get the opportunity to ask questions and learn from a member or expert. You would usually allocate a specific time slot for this. 60 minutes is the average session time, with 30 minutes prep and 30 minutes to promote the event.

AVERAGE TIME 120 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR

Events and Activities

Events serve as pivotal moments in fostering community growth and vibrancy. Their significance lies in the dynamic activity they bring, enticing members to engage more frequently. Beyond mere activity, events act as trust-building platforms, offering an ideal opportunity for passive observers or "lurkers" to transition into active, regular participants. Whether conducted virtually or in person, or even through a fusion of both approaches, events hold the potential to solidify connections and deepen engagement within the community.


These gatherings, whether online meetups or physical gatherings, create a shared experience and exchange of ideas. They not only infuse the community with energy and excitement but also serve as catalysts for forging stronger bonds among members.



Events and Activities

Here are a few suggestions on how to use events and activities to encourage active and regular participants.

Knowledgehub




HOTSEATS

Enable members to ask questions on a particular theme to an expert or key member over a set period of time. 60 minutes is the average session time, with 30 minutes prep and 30 minutes to promote the event.

**AVERAGE TIME 120 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR**

Knowledgehub




WEBINARS

Using virtual meeting software, host an online presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar to bring members together. 30 to 60 minutes is the average session time, with 60 to 90 minutes prep and 30 minutes to promote the event.

**AVERAGE TIME 180 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR**

Knowledgehub




SURVEYS

Run surveys to ask about satisfaction, benefits, needs and topics of interest for the community now and in the future.

**AVERAGE TIME 180 MINS
USED ONCE PER YEAR**

Knowledgehub




POLLS

Simple multiple choice polls on issues that could be entertaining, informative or topical, are quick wins to get members to participate in the community.

**AVERAGE TIME 15 MINS
USED ONCE PER MONTH**

Knowledgehub



COMMUNITY CAFÉS

Establishing a dedicated discussion thread or regular virtual meeting for members to share their personal and professional updates, helps to connect members and build trusted contacts.

**AVERAGE TIME 60 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR**

Content

Members are initially drawn to a community by its content, but it's the sense of belonging and interactions within the community that keeps them engaged and invested. To effectively attract new members and maintain active participation, understanding the types of content that resonate with the membership is crucial. Whether you're curating content yourself or soliciting contributions from members, it's essential to tailor the content to align with the community's interests and needs.


By investing time into understanding the content that captivates and entices members, you can craft or source materials that not only draw in new members but also keep existing ones engaged.



Content

Here are a few suggestions on how to use content to draw members to the community and create a sense of belonging.

Knowledgehub




RESOURCES

Useful documents might include reference materials, policy documents, information leaflets or handbooks giving instructions on topics or procedures that members will want to access to help them in their work.

AVERAGE TIME 120 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR

Knowledgehub



HOW-TO GUIDES

This could be a document or a video guide, either way, it is an informative piece of content that tells the consumer how to perform a specific task by giving step-by-step instructions.

AVERAGE TIME 120 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR

Knowledgehub




BLOGS

Blogging has become an essential tool in the recruitment of new members, reporting outcomes of events, discussing topical content, sharing personal reflections, learning, and sharing how the community is working towards its purpose and objectives.

AVERAGE TIME 60 MINS
USED ONCE A MONTH

Knowledgehub




PROMO MATERIAL

Make use of opportunities to distribute content via different channels which may include advertising outreach, public relations, social media, email marketing etc.

AVERAGE TIME 60 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES A YEAR

Knowledgehub



TEMPLATES

Share templates that help members use a specific structure and produce documentation based on the learning and proven practice of others. This saves time and provides a clear pattern to follow. You might encourage members to like and provide feedback on templates they have found useful.

AVERAGE TIME 60 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES A YEAR

Communication

Clear and consistent communication serves as the bridge that connects members within a community, creating a sense of belonging and inclusion. Providing regular updates and reminders is pivotal in ensuring that members remain informed and engaged. By highlighting recent discussions, upcoming events, and activities, you can create a roadmap that keeps everyone in the loop, inviting them to actively participate.

These communications act as guiding beacons, directing members to opportunities where their contributions are valued, encouraging involvement, and solidifying their connection to the community.


Consistent updates not only inform but also inspire action. They serve as gentle nudges, reminding members of the ongoing pulse of the community.



Communication

Here are a few suggestions on how to use communication to encourage active and regular participants.

Knowledgehub




MEMBERSHIP REQUESTS

Dealing with a membership request is the first introduction to the community. Thank them and draw attention to the fantastic content, great members and irresistible discussions.

**AVERAGE TIME 5-10 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES A MONTH**

Knowledgehub




INVITATIONS

Send clear invitations to bring new members to the community, highlighting why they have been invited and the benefits of joining. Include calls to action and signpost potential new members to areas of interest.

**AVERAGE TIME 5-10 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES A MONTH**

Knowledgehub



THANK YOU POSTS

When members take part and share with the community, make it a habit to thank them for their time and contributions, encouraging them and others to do it again. Use this opportunity to re-engage them and build on what's been shared already.

**AVERAGE TIME 5-10 MINS
USED 3-4 TIMES A MONTH**

Knowledgehub



NEWSLETTERS

A regular message to all members reminds them that the community is there, brings them back and is key to keeping the momentum going.

**AVERAGE TIME 30 MINS
USED 1-2 TIMES A MONTH**

Knowledgehub



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Make sure members can easily find the latest content and activities in the community and signpost them to discussions, events and content that you wish to promote or encourage them to participate in.

**AVERAGE TIME 15 MINS
USED 1-2 TIMES A MONTH**

Building Your Action Plan

Now that you have an overview of these tactics, you can begin building your action plan.

Consider the size, purpose, and objectives of your community. Tailor your approach to meet the unique needs of your community and allocate your resources effectively.

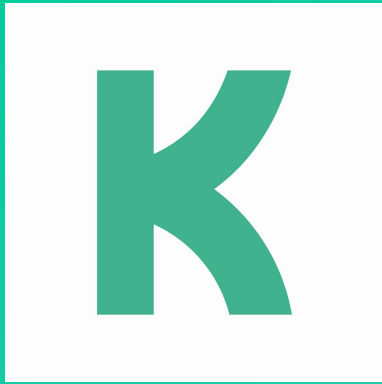
In the first three months, focus on discussions, events and activities, content, and communication. As your community grows, adapt your strategy to ensure that it continues to thrive.

Remember, there's no one-size-fits-all approach to online community facilitation. Experiment with these tactics, monitor their effectiveness, and make adjustments as needed. Engaging and sustaining your online community takes dedication and the right mix of tactics to create a thriving environment for your members.

By understanding the time required for each tactic and tailoring your strategy accordingly, you can build a vibrant online community that fosters meaningful engagement and growth.

Good luck with your community management journey!





khub.net