

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO **Creating a Successful B2B User Community**



A hands-on, practical guide for B2B SaaS providers on launching, growing & maintaining your own impactful online user community.

**Gainsight** | **DIGITAL HUB**

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# Why online communities?

**It's no secret that communities empower brands. We see this every day as household name B2C brands replace their one-way, promotional, advertising-driven communication practices with a more collaborative and conversational approach through the customer communities they build online. But what are the benefits of building and growing an online community for B2B software companies? Read on to discover the impact they can have on your business.**

Online customer communities directly inject value into at least three core areas of your business: customer service, customer success, and product development.

Best-in-class user communities are serving their organizations by lowering service costs and increasing customer retention. How is it possible for communities to have such a big impact scaling support and success?

Online communities serve as long-term content engines based on a one-to-many principle. Every time a user generates new content (think: answers to common questions, use case queries, best practice sharing etc), it's not only seen by the small group of community members, but by the thousands of other visitors who stumble upon the page in question via a search engine—on average 51% of B2B software community traffic comes from organic Google searches.

Additionally, for B2B software companies serving hundreds, if not thousands, of end users, the benefits of having a transparent, multi-channel, community become clear. As more and more SaaS companies experiment with freemium pricing models, it's important to ensure that all of your users—from freemium and up—are being served effectively, appropriately and in a scalable way. In fact, online communities have a big role to play in increasing conversion rates from freemium user to paying customer. Why are communities so successful at this? A space where they can share best practices amongst each other and easily self-serve rather than contact your support team is an ideal way to provide them with top-notch service at minimal cost and effort for you.



**Pro Tip:** Online communities have a big role to play in increasing conversion rates from freemium user to paying customer.

Communities are a powerful engine for the creation, capture, discovery and cultivation of conversations —and therefore help and support content. These conversations provide a new way for people to truly engage with one another about what's important to them and share their opinions and user experiences with each other and your company. At the same time, communities create new opportunities for companies to connect with their consumers, develop trust-based relationships, and gain unique customer insights to fuel more effective

product development, customer success, and service experiences. Our B2B communities see that an average of 59% of content is created by community members.

Unlike social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter, online communities are customer networks you actually own—as [CustomerThink says](#), “it can be a tough pill to swallow knowing that social media platforms have nearly complete control of your community.”

You can harvest the user-generated content they produce, analyze it, and use it to monitor customer health, happiness and engagement levels. Community content and user data can be seamlessly integrated within your existing website(s), customer portals, mobile apps, and your team’s own systems—from Gainsight to Zendesk to Salesforce. This unlocks a wealth of customer data, giving you a 360 view of customer engagement and happiness, while allowing you to predict churn too. What’s more? You can continue to deliver the right social customer experiences for your brand no matter how the social media landscape changes.

## What purpose will your community serve?

There are numerous reasons for B2B SaaS companies to adopt a community. Some leverage their community as a support channel: you can see up to a 50% reduction in support tickets thanks to the fact that online communities facilitate self-service, as customers can answer each others’ questions. Other organizations use their community to boost customer engagement and product adoption (with a positive knock-on effect on retention rates), while some prefer to harness their users in a community for product development—of course, the most successful B2B communities are put to work in all three of these areas.



*The Future of Customer Service, Forrester*

Because they offer so many compelling benefits, communities are powerful drivers of cultural change within organizations large and small. Successful communities, such as network building company, [Extreme Networks](#), can have thousands of end users. In fact, within just 6 months of launch, smart software solutions company Infoland, saw over 50% of their user base active on [their community](#).

## Positive impact at all stages of the customer journey

Customer communities have a role to play at all stages of the customer lifecycle. In the pre-sales phase, for example, having a community Q&A can address prospects' questions and help them make a more informed decision—and purchase!—faster. In the post-purchase phase, communities help you to drive down service costs and improve customer satisfaction by providing customers with a high-quality self-service channel. Finally, communities encourage customer interaction, making them a great place to gain real insights into how you can improve your product from the people who use it every day. In other words, the community is a great way to get customer feedback and allow you to shape your product based on the voice of the customer.

## Some extra traffic? Yes, please!

Not only do communities offer authentic peer-to-peer recommendations and advice, they also help drive potential buyers from search to product pages. Research has shown that well integrated customer communities that embed their content across an entire site or app, rather than remaining siloed, help businesses generate extra leads, drive higher conversion and accelerate the online buying cycle.



## Communities for Customer Success

### Using your community to drive user engagement

**How does an increase in customer engagement improve the customer experience and impact your bottom line?**

Our Customer Success Manager at Gainsight, Martine Van Deursen, focuses on the two-way relationship building behind engagement in her definition:

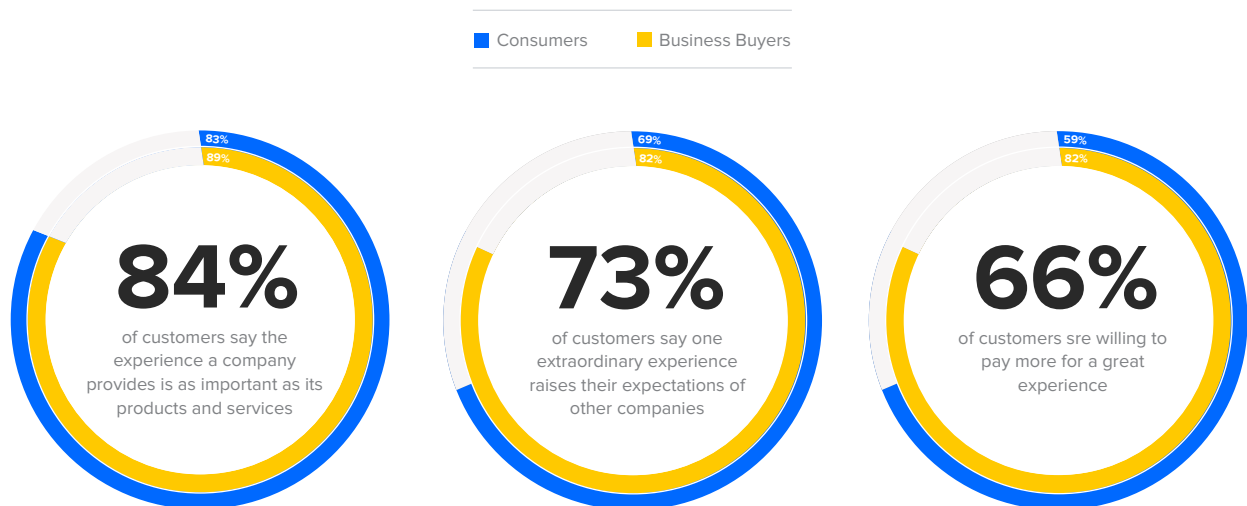
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*“Customer engagement in B2B is all about customers experiencing a real partnership. When customers feel listened to they tend to share their opinions and experiences with you, and each other, in order to influence the development of your products and services. This both drives revenue and allows you to continuously improve your product.”*

Ultimately, no matter how you define customer engagement, the truth is that organizations are becoming more and more aware that it’s a vital way to generate revenue for the business.

As a general rule of thumb, the more active and engaged the customer is with a company, the more satisfied they tend to be. Just take a look at these stats from [Salesforce](#).

## The Customer Experience Stakes Have Never Been Higher



Source: [Salesforce State of the Connected Customer Report](#)

There are some that argue with this point by saying that it’s not the role of an organization to make customers happy, only to make them successful, but that’s simply not the case. The data shows that customers expect companies to meet them in the middle.

## Customer engagement indicates your business health

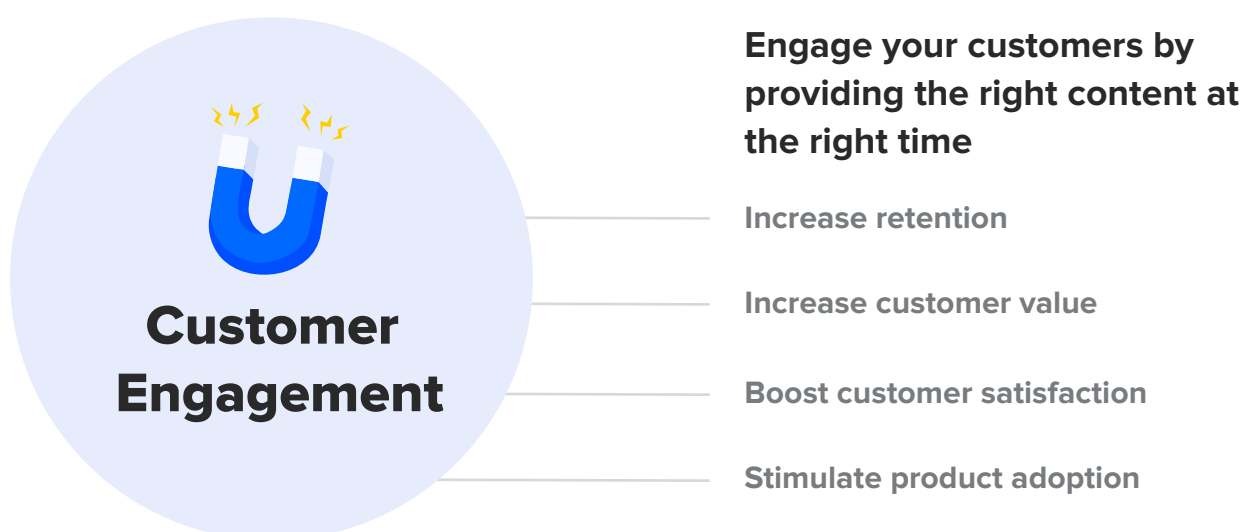
It’s possible to stare at retention numbers all day long, but that doesn’t change anything. An increase in customer engagement results in a better customer experience, which leads to higher customer satisfaction and success. Ultimately, this leads to an increase in customer retention and therefore revenue! Simple, right?

## Why a community for customer engagement?

Online communities give your customers a transparent platform to interact and share best practices with each other, and your business. Communities foster the feeling that customers are part of an interactive and interesting group that allows them to learn from each other and drives engagement.

When you inspire people with plenty of relevant content, you increase engagement and, with that, retention and product adoption rates. Create how-to's, pull together inspiring case studies and use the events you organize as content engines too. Distribute all of this great stuff across your central customer community and make sure to push it to users with relevant, personalized notifications.

What's more? Customers can vote on the best answers in a community which not only increases interaction, it reduces pressure on your customer support teams by allowing customers to self-serve and help each other. Members come for the content, and stay for the community!



## Using your community to scale customer self-service

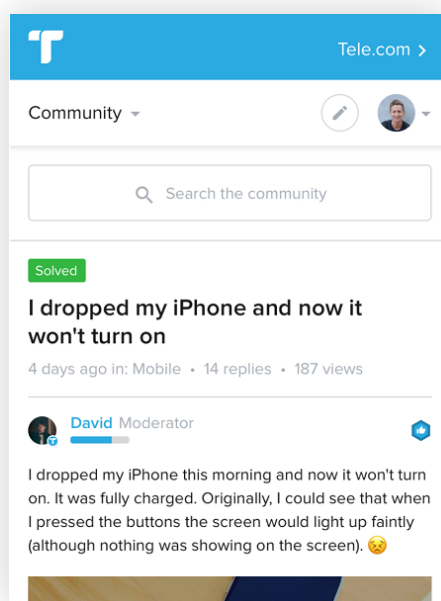
**Peer-to-peer conversations make online support better and more scalable, and they offer a human touch that the latest 'cost-reduction' technologies like bots and AI will always struggle to replicate—at a fraction of the resource cost of customer service conversations.**

Of course you'll always try to build your products in such a way that your users enjoy easy onboarding and friction-free usage. But let's face it—there will always be questions. You're probably already well aware that the preference towards self-service has skyrocketed in the past few years and we see this continuing to grow. Your users are perfectly happy to self-serve if the process is made easy and effortless for them. Our B2B communities see an average of 70% peer-to-peer (P2P) support—proof that users will and do engage and contribute to the self-service process.

That's where the beauty of your online community comes in!

All of your customers combined probably know a lot more about your product than you think—and what's more, many of them are willing to share their expertise. So offer your community as a first line of contact. If the answer is not there, and people start asking, get your in-house experts involved, and have their answers benefit many users well into the future rather than just the one user who is asking right now.

The result? We see that close to 50% of customer support questions can actually be answered by peers easily. For those that can't, ensure users always have the option to talk with support or CSM. Enabling this mechanism can deflect 25 to 50% of the questions currently hitting your support team.

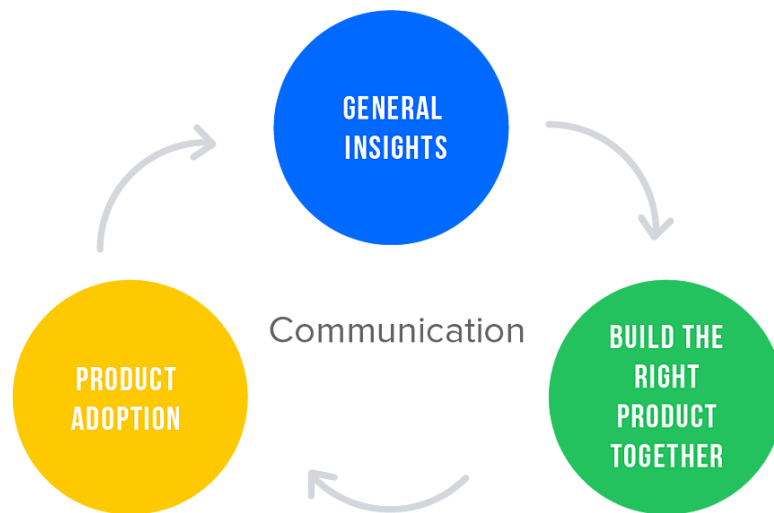


*Peer-to-peer conversations  
supporting customer service  
initiatives*

With a community, you're not just helping existing users to self-serve. Because community content ranks so highly with Google, a large majority of a community's traffic typically comes from organic search—usually in the range of 60% to 80%. Prospective customers looking to self-educate can also be helped here.

Remember, the self-service content on your community isn't limited to one standalone destination. Use your platform's API or out-of-the-box embeddables to inject posts, knowledge articles and support documents into your apps, websites or software products. At Gainsight, we believe giving users easy access to relevant, contextual support is so important, that we've even developed our in-app support widget—allowing you to integrate your knowledge base and community content across your own entire platform. One of our B2B communities has reported a 17% increase in engagement since implementing the in-app support widget.

## Using your community for insights, ideation and product adoption




*The product-community feedback loop*


The product-user feedback loop is Gainsight's methodology for incorporating your user community into your product workflow and embedding your product within your users' own daily workflows. Knowledge is power, and your community is filled with knowledge—let's explore how a community helps you get hold of it:

### 1. General insights—feedback on new releases and creative use cases.


212 Topics Recently active ▾

 **freydrew** Community and Advocacy Manager

**PRODUCT BULLETIN** **Product Update: My Usage and Management Console**

 **PRODUCT UPDATE BULLETIN**

Overview This release introduces the first version of a brand new My Usage section in the console, which provides accurate information on your license usage across all Webroot® solutions...

👍 8 👁 249 💬 0  2 days ago

*Webroot is using their community as a way to update users on feature requests and gather feedback from their user base*

## **2. Product ideation—tap into the expertise of your users and create a transparent process to help shape your product roadmap.**

A community allows you to identify first-hand the most (and least), popular user requests—arming you with concrete business propositions from your customers to bring to your Product team. This, in turn, allows your product team to prioritize requests based on solid community data, all the while encouraging a more streamlined and data-driven relationship between your Customer Success and Product team.

So often in B2B SaaS companies, gleaned this kind of feedback from end users can be tricky—having an online community to interact with your users allows you to do just that. The beauty of using a customer community is that it offers multi-way communication. Not only can you have a dialog with your customer—you encourage dialogs between them too. In B2B software communities with a focus on customer ideation, between 30% and 40% of all user content posted can be found in the ideation section. Imagine integrating this system with JIRA or your ticketing tool and streamlining your customer feedback workflow all in one place like this!

It's essential that you have a clear objective for your ideation group(s) and that you separate them according to products or departments—the key here is to ensure that each forum gathers ideas in an efficient manner, which allows for a clear process flow of filtering, reviewing and implementing the proposed ideas.

As a community manager you'll play a vital role in managing any ideation forums or initiatives. You'll need to make sure that the channels of communication are established internally, with the right departments or areas, as well as externally, with the ideators engaged in the process of proposing ideas, discussing those ideas and voting for their preferred ones. Of course you can't listen to all of your customers at once, but it's necessary to stay close to them to prioritize what goes on your product roadmap.

## **3. Product adoption—use private communities to beta test new features with the help of your customer advocates.**

Successful product adoption is integral to long-term success for B2B software companies. The onboarding stage is your chance to demonstrate the value your product offers your customers—thereby boosting retention, avoiding churn and building revenue. Here are just a few of the ways your community can support product adoption:

- **Lean on your super users!** Those most active and dedicated members of your community are an integral part of your team—use them! They know your product inside out and can take the pressure off your support team by providing answers to other users' during product adoption.
- **Make announcements.** As we know, especially in the product world, users can be afraid of change. Using your community to make 'pre-announcements' to your users can go a long way to alleviating users' fears around product changes. People fear the unknown—enlighten them using your community!
- **Direct new user questions to your community** and avoid your product or support teams answering

queries over and over again. The more questions that are answered on your community, the larger your knowledge base becomes and the easier customers can find resolutions to their problems. Keep building your knowledge base—it's a gift that keeps on giving.

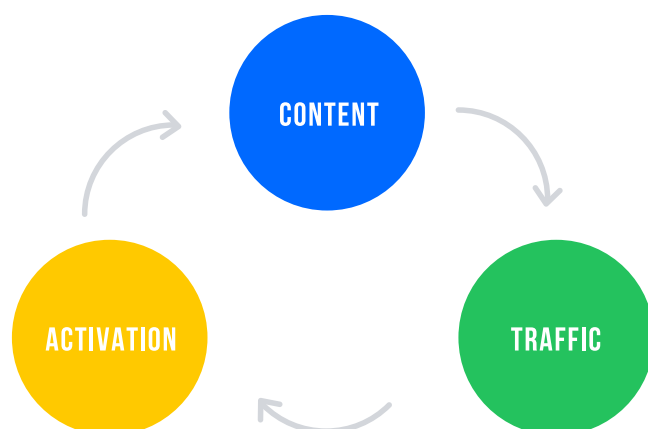
- **Increase peer-to-peer collaboration** in your community, especially when it comes to adopting new product features. Encourage users to share and discuss their real-life use cases and offer tutorials, best practices and how tos for specific scenarios. This is a granular level of guidance that internally, you simply don't have the capacity or expertise to offer (no matter how much you may wish you could!)

## How communities work: The content-traffic-activation flywheel

**Successful communities immediately begin producing results. Typically, three elements need to come together to get things moving: content, traffic, and activation.**

The content-traffic-activation flywheel in customer communities is what ultimately drives long-term value. Regardless of a community's underlying goals, it's important to look at it as a long-term play—an entity that requires care and effort to flourish. With the right strategies in place, its value will only increase as time goes by.

**Content** is—unsurprisingly—what's posted to the community. Early on in a community's life cycle, moderators should be seeding discussions and responding to customer posts, when appropriate. What's important is demonstrating that you're actively involved and encouraging users to participate in conversations. Over time, user-generated content will begin to take center stage and propel your community forward. In the beginning, it's also important for community managers and/or moderators to find the right content structure for the community. Which categories work best for the topics your users are talking about? Are there sub-topics that are proving to be so popular they need their own home within the community?



**Traffic** refers to the flow of visitors to the community from outside sources. The content you create will drive traffic to your community. We've found that content from inside established communities drives millions of relevant impressions each month on search engines, and can give up to four times higher click through rates than paid search activity.

**Activation** is all about getting that buy-in from new users and encouraging regular activity on the community. We've already discussed why engagement is so vital in driving Customer Success results. Never forget that communities are centered around human interaction, so think of activation as analogous to building real relationships. The more you invest, the more you get back. Make sure that you give people a warm welcome that really motivates them to get involved and participate. Ensure you select a platform that offers functionality to help you boost activation and engagement, like gamification and upvoting great answers.

## Getting started with your community

### Structuring the right team

Your community should be contributing to the positioning and branding of your organization as a whole, and it goes without saying that every user visiting your community should have a positive experience. Your community team's role is to make sure that this is the case.

### Pro Tips: for community team members:

#### DOs:

- ✓ Acknowledge peer-to-peer support
- ✓ Engage with potential super users
- ✓ Welcome new members

#### DON'Ts:

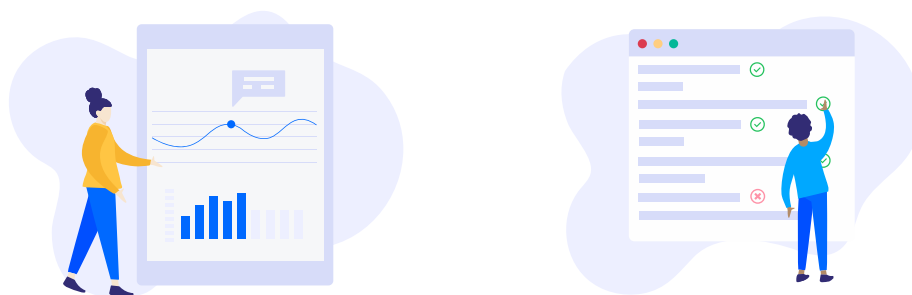
- ✗ Ignore super users
- ✗ Answer questions when users could
- ✗ Break the '24h rule'

### Creating a content strategy & plan for your community

Planning and executing your content strategy is essential for your community success. A well-planned and executed content strategy really can mean the difference between a lively community and an idle one. There are three strategic aspects to incorporate into your community content strategy:

1. Clearly defined community content objectives
2. Well-planned content creation (think: clear categories and a content calendar)
3. Regular content measurement

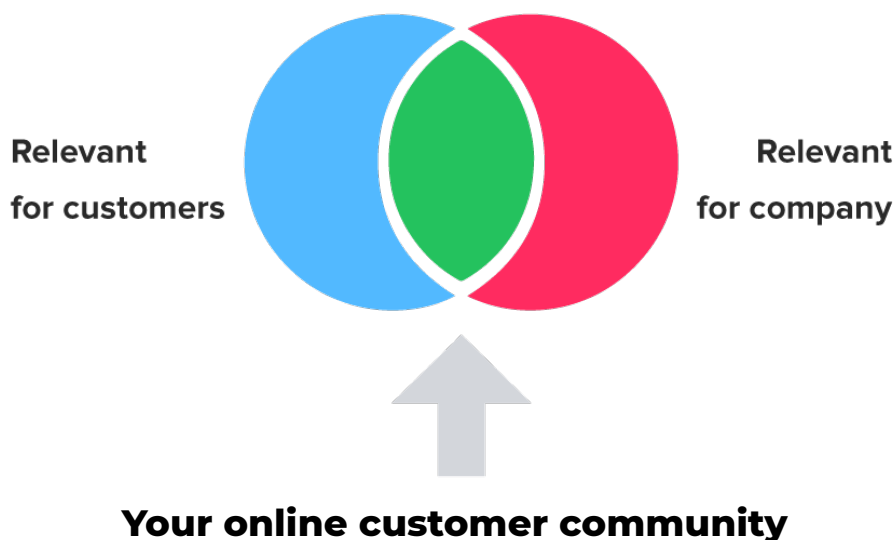
Let's take a look at how you can harness these three elements to create a great content strategy for your community.



## Clearly defined community content objectives




One key goal that every community manager should keep at the forefront of their mind is that the community needs to provide a fun and engaging experience for members.

So how do you make that happen? First, you must know your audience. What are their interests, their quirks and their motivations for being community members in the first place? Use these insights to determine which content types and topics they'll find fun and engaging.




## Content planning

We've put together some pro tips for planning community and/or knowledge base content categories:


-  **Start small.** Choose no more than 5 content categories to begin with. This allows your organization get clear on your language and tone of voice, as well as manage the community content easily from the beginning. Avoid content categories that could be defined differently by different people - keep it simple and clear. In time, more content categories can be added, and your existing categories can be refined and extended accordingly (for example, an initial category on 'product information' can later be broken down into specific product categories).
-  **Avoid overlapping categories.** Make clear distinctions between your chosen categories. Leave no room for confusion. Vague category names such as 'general information' and 'product information' are the worst culprits for this - beware!
-  **Remember, content categories are not topics or subjects.** Confusing content categories with topics can occur more easily than you'd expect—especially in product focused communities. Take for instance a category named "analytics integrations for Your Software v4.5'. Such a category will be exhausted after 10 or 20 topics and will interest only a very small sub section of community members—Your Software v4.5 users who are not only interested in integration options but specifically those for analytics tooling. So when defining your categories, ask yourself: 'is this more appropriate as a topic within an existing (or maybe new) category?'

While all your content should—of course—support the main goal(s) of your community, it's also important to make sure there's a good rhythm and cadence to the posted topics, and that these topics vary with a diverse range of messages.

You can liken this to process to the practice of turning the pages of a magazine. Each time a page is turned, you find a new kind of article in a different format from the last. Interviews, rubrics, and reviews come together to form a varied mix within the magazine and keep the reader interested until the very last page.

 **Pro tip:** for a comprehensive content calendar, use this list to plan each piece of content and get all your ducks in a row before you publish:

- Topic title
- Body text
- Visual materials
- Type of content
- Forum
- Sticky (yes/no)
- Public tags
- Who is responsible for creating the topic
- Deadline for placing it in the community
- Fixed/flexible deadline
- Ongoing subject (yes/no)
- Promotional (yes/no)
- Social media sharing

 **Pro Tip:** While you need to vary the types, formats and themes of your community, remember to keep your tone of voice consistent. Community content should be surprising and appealing, but equally in line with the style of the company. We recommend creating a community style guide to help your community team maintain consistent language, tone and branding. You can also use the style guide to direct certain types of language, angles and topics that should be avoided within the brand community.

## Content measurement

You've defined your content objectives and planned a comprehensive content calendar. Wait, you're not quite done! It's vital to measure success, of course. How is all of this well-planned, strategic community content performing?

You can measure your community engagement, participation and involvement quite easily using KPIs such as shares, views, comments and clicks.

Before you invest time in analyzing and measuring your community impact, align with key stakeholders. Are the metrics you plan on reviewing actually representative of what your team needs to know? A customer service stakeholder will want to hear how the community has improved time to resolution or ticket deflection, whilst a customer retention team will be more interested in seeing NPS score trends in community members over non-community members, for example. It's important to select a community platform that allows you to integrate data with your other analytics and CRM tooling so you can see the full picture and use these insights to drive your Customer Success programs.

## 3, 2, 1... Launch! Start small, move fast

One of the biggest mistakes brands make when it comes to launching their new community is taking the "big launch" approach. Community managers often mistakenly believe that an effective community is launched with a big bang—from our experience, this is just not the case.

A community should grow organically, so it doesn't become self-cannibalizing. The way to enable this is by taking a staggered launch approach.

### Follow these steps to implement a staggered launch:

- ✓ Send a VIP invite to a small number of brand advocates
- ✓ Next, expand these invitations to a wider network
- ✓ Allow the community to gain its own steam
- ✓ Enable founding members to feel ownership and responsibility for the successful management of the community
- ✓ Only later, open the community up to new members

Richard Millington, one the leading industry experts on community management and Founder of Feverbee, believes that the key to a successful, sustainable and long-term community is to [‘start small’](#), and our experience at Gainsight shows the same.

Don’t invest budget or resources into a ‘big bang’ style launch – you may see a larger number of initial members, but you’ll struggle to maintain engagement in the long-term and your community may die a disappointing death.

Ultimately—maintain realistic expectations when it comes to the speed at which your new community grows. Remember, member numbers don’t count—active and engaged member numbers do.

At the end of the day, you want to run a community that’s strong and successful in the long-term rather than a flash-in-the-pan site that disappears as quickly as it launched. There is no such thing as overnight success when it comes to community management.

Here’s our step-by-step guide to a smooth, stress-free community launch. Can you check off all the items on this list?

## Community Launch checklist

Content	Description
Categorization is final	Categories and subforums should have clear structure and naming conventions—with no overlaps. Do users know where to find information?
Every subforum has at least 3 topics (or articles) which are relevant for users	Users must be able to discover something of interest during their initial visit. Nobody wants to go to an empty restaurant!
Post-launch content calendar is complete	Your content calendar is at its most vital during the first days after go-live, so you can keep the community active when there are very few users. Are you ready and confident?
Welcome topic is prepared	Introduce yourself and the community, so members recognize you from the get-go and know what to expect from the community.
Terms & conditions	No rules, no fun. Legally, you need to be prepared.

Traffic	Description
Static integrations are active on most relevant / prominent locations on websites	Your static integrations are a key traffic driver. Make sure they’re in place pre-launch to avoid slowing down member activation (registrations, topics, replies, etc).

Traffic	Description
Static integrations are active for secondary positions (e.g. end of FAQ, outgoing marketing / customer support emails)	Another traffic driver - use targeted messaging for existing users who have support questions or new customer queries and direct them to specific topics or categories within the community.
Community launch campaign	Depending on the launch approach you take (VIP invite only or open registration), you may choose to run a marketing campaign to promote the community launch across your existing digital assets, social media and corporate website. Link new members to the welcome topic to activate them as efficiently as possible. You may also choose to run a promotion or competition for new members who register and perform certain behaviors within the community such as posting topics or contributing to initial discussions.

Activation	Description
User ranks are defined	Create a clear list of user ranks that active users will progress through based on their community activity and behavior.
User badges have been defined	Create a clear list of user badges so that users can earn rewards by being active and helpful in the community.
Notifications are optimized	Have you captured the right tone of voice and ensured your notifications include links to helpful topics, like your 'how to' articles?
Community team roles are defined	Community members are more active if they see a community team that's also active and responsive. Can users identify your community team members easily?
Activation content is ready	Content from your calendar with a goal to stimulate user activity (e.g. "this month's trending apps") should, by now, have been created or at the very least planned.

## Welcoming & guiding your members: your to-do list

What's the best way to welcome new community members and bring them into the fold as quickly as possible? Guide them through their first few interactions!

Remember, new members usually register out of an individual need or desire to get a question answered or a problem solved—not necessarily to get involved in the community. That's the functional motivation. So how we activate these new users during their first sign-up activity and immediately afterwards goes a long way to contributing towards our overall community success.

To give new users the best onboarding experience we've compiled a list of recommended posts and 'how to' topics to point them in the right direction. Take a look at the list below and ensure you've covered all bases when it comes to making new members feel right at home!

### **Suggested welcome topics and posts to activate new members**

- ✓ Welcome! 5 tips to get you started in our community (include recommendations that users complete their profile, ask questions, use the search function, provide plenty of detail when posting new topics/questions and avoid spam)
- ✓ How to start a new topic
- ✓ How to edit your own post
- ✓ How to report inappropriate content
- ✓ How to attach images and videos to your post
- ✓ How to unsubscribe from topics and subforums

## **Grow your community at lightning speed**

Your community needs to be successful on a small scale before it can work well with a larger audience. As long as your community concept is interesting and engaging enough for your initial founding members to truly get involved, you can rest assured that your community will grow successfully.

But it's important to make it as easy as possible for your customers and prospects to become community members—this should be a process that is clearly laid out for them.

Keep in mind that before a person can engage in the community, they need to learn about your community, be convinced that they can gain something from visiting your community, and then be persuaded that joining is a good idea.

While each of these steps will of course vary from person to person, especially in the B2B space where companies may be serving thousands of end users with different reasons for using your product, you can rest assured that there are people who are eager to share knowledge, but who simply don't know about your community! Make sure that you have a clear overview of all the people that could potentially become community members.

## **Motivating people to join and participate in your community**

Motivating people to join and participate in your community is key to community success. What this really comes down to is consistently making clear to new and potential members the benefits of *actively*

*participating in your community.*

**Here's a list of potential reasons you can adapt and use to motivate people to join and participate in your community:**

- ✓ Your community is the **BEST** source of relevant and complete information about your product
- ✓ Your community is the **ONLY** place to share experiences and best practices with other expert users of your product
- ✓ Your community provides news and updates on new product / feature announcements **BEFORE** any other channel
- ✓ Your community provides the MOST **UP-TO-DATE** information about outages and service failures
- ✓ Your community is a place to receive **REWARDS** for sharing your expert knowledge
- ✓ Your community is **THE** place where you gather feedback to improve your product
- ✓ Participating in your community gives **EXCLUSIVE** access to private areas and content
- ✓ Your community is the **ONLY** way to get involved in beta-testing new product features

## **Common mistakes to avoid**

It's easy to make mistakes when it comes to community management. Over time, we learn which approaches facilitate successful community growth and maintenance, and which contribute to dead online wastelands.

Let's avoid sending your community out to pasture!

**Here are our top six common community management mistakes to avoid:**

### **✗ 1. DON'T have a 'big bang' launch**

We think we covered this pretty thoroughly above, but we can't stress it enough – don't invest all your marketing budget into a big launch campaign.

### **✗ 2. DON'T focus entirely on the technology**

This is a common one. While it's vital to select the right platform upfront, that's not going to guarantee you a long and successful community lifespan. Treat your members (especially that initial, founding group) as the precious advocates they are!

### **✗ 3. DON'T expect your community to replace your marketing campaigns**

Yes, well-executed communities drive phenomenal SEO results. Yes, you get to communicate with your customer base across a multitude of digital channels, wherever they are. But whilst an online community is a highly effective tool in your digital marketing toolbox, it doesn't constitute the entire toolbox.

#### ✘ 4. DON'T leave your community to 'self-regulate' entirely

We recommend allowing early members to shape the concept and guidelines of your community, but as engagement and interactions increase, you can't expect your advocates to do all your community management for you, like a group of vigilantes! Check out our tips on staffing up your community management appropriately later in this guide.

#### ✘ 5. DON'T expect your community to replace your customer service 100%

Yes, implementing a customer community with a self-service focus can reduce customer service requests by up to 50%—but there will still be instances when a user's problem or question just cannot be solved by their peers—no matter how helpful members try to be! Make sure you select a platform that integrates with your existing ticketing system, so that particularly tricky questions can be easily escalated to your support team.

#### ✘ 6. DON'T misunderstand your user's true motivation

As we already know, most users join initially with a need for themselves, not out of a desire to contribute to a community. As a community manager, your challenge is to turn this initial self-serving motivation into a group-serving mentality, using activation and engagement techniques. Don't worry, we've got more advice for you on those later in this guide!

## Moderation tips & tricks

So, your team is in place and your community is up and running—very successfully, we hope! However, the work doesn't stop there. Maintaining a successful customer community comes with its fair share of tasks. In this section we're going to address some of the big, frustrating jobs that fall onto a community manager or moderator's plate and give you some top tips to transform them into stress-free tasks.

### Snip, snip: How to prune old content?

As your community becomes more mature, and your product develops, some of the content provided and answers given are of course likely to become obsolete. Since you want your community to be a tool that helps people quickly and easily find the right information, you're going to need to take care of any out-of-date content. Get those pruning shears out!



**Pro Tip:** Don't delete old topics or move them to an archive. Why? By doing this, you'll delete pages that have had a lot of traffic over their lifetime and this can lead to a huge decrease in organic search visitors (more on SEO and traffic generation later in this guide) because Google will notice your community's decrease in informative pages.

Rather than deleting old content, update the content that's sitting within these outdated topics. Don't panic—we're not recommending you manually go through and check every single topic in the community to do this one-by-one!

With the following approach, your community content can be updated without the blood, sweat, or tears. Go through this process a couple of times a year and you'll be golden.

## 2 stress-free steps to updating your community content



### Step 1: Create a list of the most visited topics over the past year

Check your community analytics (Google Analytics, Adobe, Mixpanel or your platform's native analytics) and export the 100 most read pages or topics.

(To check if 100 is a number that makes sense for your community, take a look at the number of views your topics are getting. Decide on the number of pages your team will check based on this, and decide to only check pages that have been viewed over a certain amount of times. This may be as low as 25 views or as high as 100 views, depending on your own community and its lifecycle stage.)



**Pro Tip:** The majority of your most-read pages will still be up-to-date and containing the correct information—for example: user profile pages, category pages and topics that don't contain any out-of-date information. In most cases, only 10% - 20% of topics will actually need to be adjusted with updated content.



### Step 2: Update the topic content

Updating a topic can be done in one of two ways:

#### 1. You can update the first comment of the topic by adding the right information.

Make sure to add the updated information in bold. In the updated comment, it's important to mention the date so that visitors can immediately see that the information is fresh, e.g.:

***Edit 11 November 2020 by [company name]: The new rates for 2020 are....***

You could also decide to link to a newer topic that contains the right information, like this:

***Edit 11 November 2020 by [company name]: The new rates for 2020 can be found in this topic:...***

This approach is likely to also gift you with extra 'Google juice' because it will lead to a higher SEO ranking of the updated topic from those extra clicks and visitors to the newer topic. It's a matrix!

#### 2. The second approach to updating your community content is to edit the answer that was already marked as 'best answer' or 'solved' so that the updated information will also appear in the first comment.



## Dealing with negative users & feedback

Every community needs a little bit of drama sometimes—we're human; this is only normal. However, dealing with very negative users can be extremely challenging for moderators. Ignoring them is—unfortunately—rarely the best course of action. We advocate addressing negative users and their feedback. Even though you're unlikely to be able to convince a particular user, your reaction will definitely improve the overall situation: other visitors will read your response and appreciate the fact that you are addressing the concern. This benefits your community reputation as well as your company's brand perception.

Managing conflict is never fun, but it is a task that community moderators will have to roll up their sleeves and jump into from time to time. Here is some advice for specific situations you may encounter, which will help you find better ways to handle negative users and feedback.

### First things first: be there for your users

If a user is (repeatedly) very negative on your community, believe it or not, he or she will have their reasons. Nobody sits down and invests time and energy like that for no reason. So the first thing to do is ask yourself:

- ✓ **What is this user trying to achieve with their negativity?**
- ✓ **Is there something I can do right now to ease their pain?**

If you see yourself as a mediator between the company and the customer, you will have a more efficient approach towards dealing with user feedback. Not only can you help your colleagues improve products, processes and services, but you can even teach the user a few things about your company. Most users will genuinely appreciate getting a transparent, in-depth peek into how things are actually working.



**Of course:** Your users are going to make a whole stack of feature requests, and it's your job to rationalize and prioritize these. You need to determine what makes sense given your roadmap and future plans, and what simply isn't worth investing valuable time and resources into. This inevitably means that you're going to have to push back on many, many feature requests from users—regularly—and often those users will be some of your most active, loyal customers.

How can you do this while retaining a positive sentiment and maintain a collaborative atmosphere so you don't discourage users from submitting ideas or requests in the future?

Here's how we respond to customer ideas or feature requests at Gainsight:



*We always make sure that every idea gets a response—no matter how 'out there' it may seem. Our approach is always to ask 'why?'. It's vital that a product manager can get to the root problem. What is the user trying to achieve with this idea? What's the problem they're trying to fix? Once we get confirmation of what the problem really is, we're in a much better position to solve it—and this way we can often find a much better solution than the original idea that was proposed."*

**Daniel Boon, Product Owner**

You'll be able to counter a lot of negative feedback on your community by simply listening to your users and assuring them that you are aware of and paying attention to their feedback.

## Some pro tips for moderators



### Long public posts, short private messages

A long reply will restore the trust of your user (and other users who read it), as they'll see that you invested significant time in sitting down and reflecting on the feedback. While answering private messages though, it's often a better choice to either redirect the user in question to the public community for further discussion, or to keep your reply as short as possible if you don't want to continue the discussion. If you send a lengthy reply to a private message, expect a lengthy reply back!



### Show empathy

We're not just talking about the mandatory "sorry to hear that" message here, but about showing some real, genuine empathy when customers are having a difficult time. You can do this by expressing that you relate to how they feel—for example, explaining that you also would be frustrated or disappointed in his or her shoes.

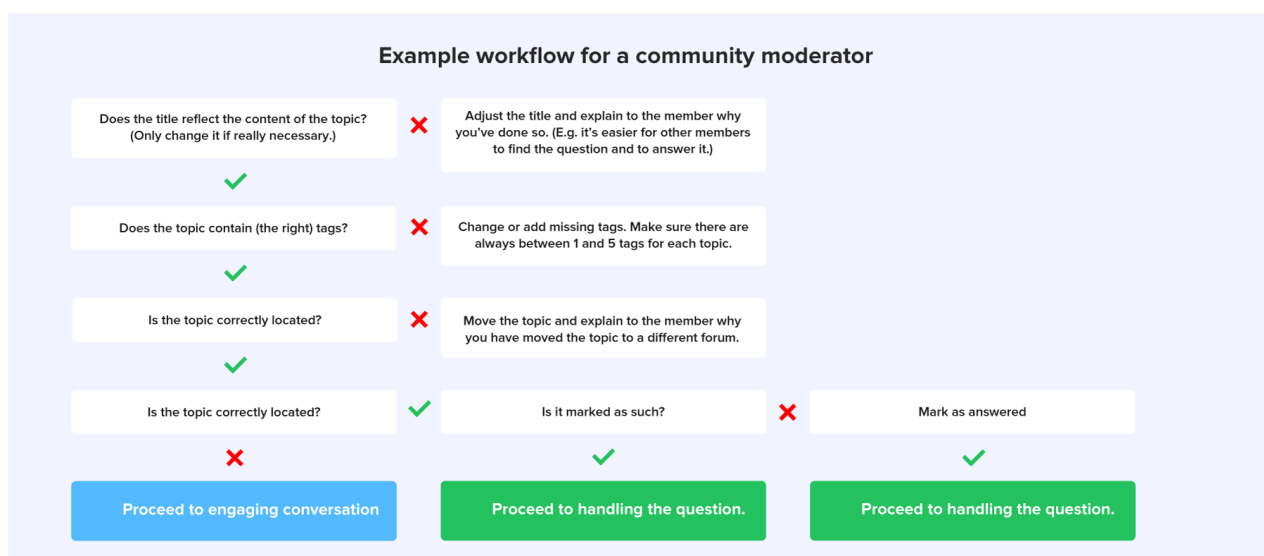


### Promise improvement

As a community moderator, you are a public advocate of your company. If you surprise users and show that you actually do care (something that—let's face it—most regular users don't expect), then they will appreciate and remember this. This doesn't just stimulate the user to come back to the community in the future, but it also has a positive effect on his perception of your company in general.

## Managing community content: Your quick guide

It's easy to jump straight in and reply to user questions so you can strike them off your backlog, but before you do that, take a moment to review each post for accuracy, categorization and tagging. We've compiled a helpful flowchart to help make this process quicker and save you time.



*Example workflow for a community moderator*

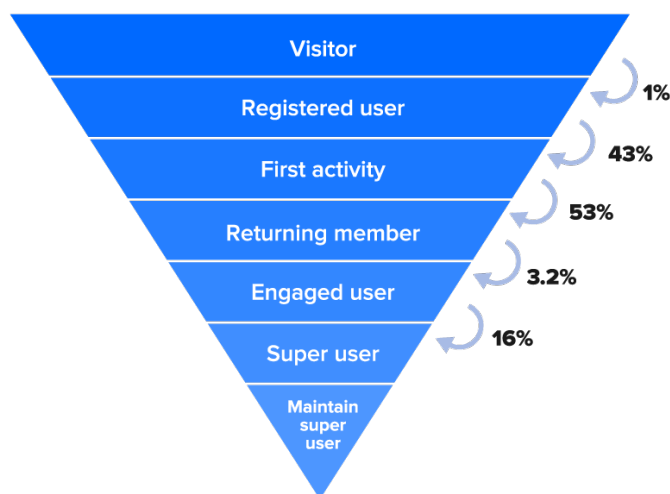
## Drive engagement with gamification, activation & super users

As we mentioned earlier in this guide, successful communities should immediately begin producing results, and there are three elements contributing to those results: content, traffic, and activation.

We're going to take a deep-dive into the activation funnel and explain how you can use tactics like gamification

and superuser initiatives to fuel your community activity and increase member engagement, which ultimately drives customer success and retention.

## The activation funnel



*The activation funnel with benchmark conversion rates*

### The activation funnel stages—explained:

#### Visitor

Simply put, a visitor is a person that visits your community web page, but doesn't (yet) register. Familiarize yourself with this horrifying statistic, and take activation seriously: only a mere 1% (on average) of people that visit a community web page will go on to become registered users.

#### Registered user

A registered user is a visitor of the community that has decided to register with the community by creating an account. We see that almost half (43%) of registered users go on to become active within the community.

#### First activity

When a user has posted or commented for the first time, this marks his or her first activity on the community. Over half (53%) of these users, on average, become returning members and will post again in the future.

#### Returning member

A user is classified as a returning member when he or she has posted in the community 5 times or more. Only 3.2% of these users become what we call engaged users.

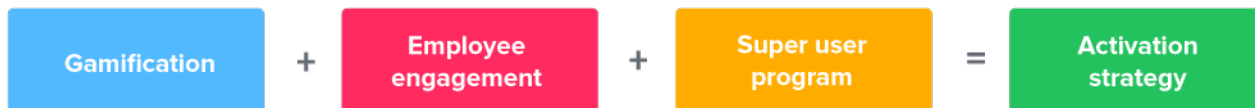
#### Engaged user

A user is considered an engaged user when he or she has posted in the community 25 times or more. 16% of these users will evolve and become a superuser.

#### Super user

Super users are the most engaged users in your community. Someone is considered a superuser when he or she has posted more than 100 times in your community (you might create your own definition).

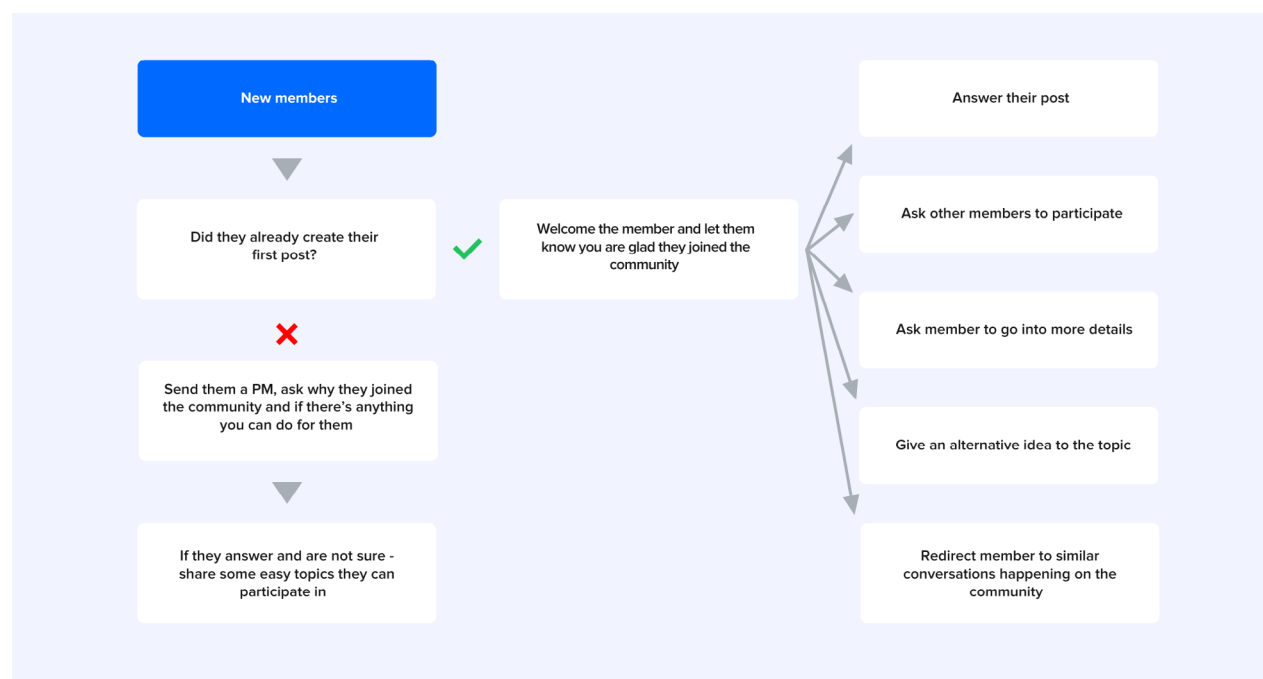
As you can see from the statistics, activation tactics are incredibly important to move as many people as possible through that activation funnel and create a healthy group of returning, engaged and super users. These members keep the community alive—without them, there wouldn't be much content for those people at the top of the activation funnel to come along and feast their beady eyes on!



*Gamification, employee engagement and a super user program come together to form your community activation strategy*

If you're not sure how to go about this, here's a handy guide to activating new members of your community:

## Active new members



*User activation workflow*

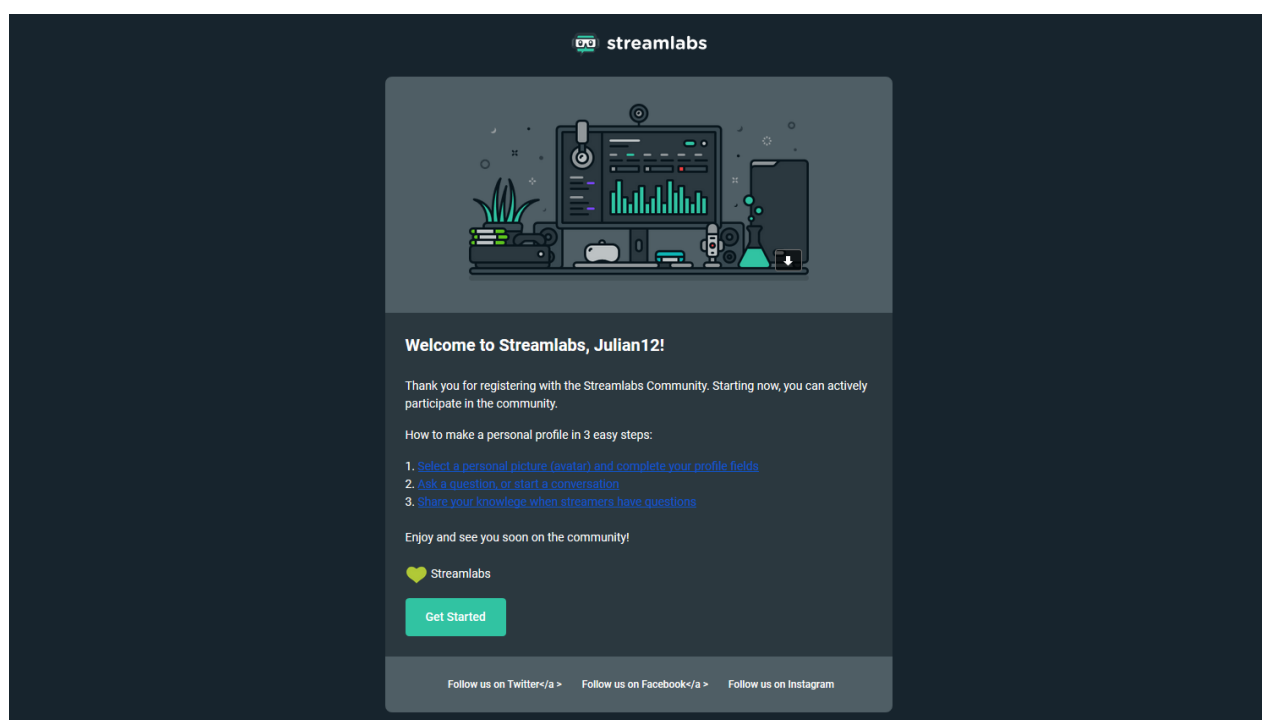
## Activate users with awesome emails

Too many community managers fail to grasp the reasons that users initially join self-service communities. Believe it or not, your average Joe is not registering out of a burning desire to give back to other people or volunteer their precious free time answering 'noob' product questions. They're signing up because they have a need of their own.

One of the ways community managers can go about activating such users and transforming them into active, engaged community members is via a strategic notification email strategy.

Traditionally, the default text of community notification emails tends to be rather formal. In the interest of engagement (and keeping things light!) think about what tone of voice you'd like your community to have (whilst complying with any brand guidelines, of course) and adjust your notification emails accordingly.

Here's a great example from streaming software company [Streamlabs](#) which showcases how you can stamp your own brand personality onto your notification emails to really skyrocket engagement:



You can see that stamping your brand on your notifications has the ability to create a much more personal touch. Users will remember this and feel more welcome and even more loyal to the brand. While email templates should reflect your brand, so too should your community. Find a platform that allows you to fully integrate your community into your website while seamlessly customizing it to match your brand. Not only will this improve the user experience, it will make people feel more welcome and loyal to your brand.

The activation email is a key moment in the journey of your users through the activation funnel. They clearly want to participate, but they're still at the very beginning, and this is where a good notification email can really make a difference:

- ✓ Give your users a warm welcome by choosing an informal tone of voice
- ✓ Advertise the benefits of engaging in your community (e.g. "learn more about your product")

- ✓ Link to the “how-to use the community” section
- ✓ Provide links to different categories, and maybe even directly to the “create a topic” page
- ✓ Some communities even have a dedicated “getting started” topic (see this great [example from software company, Thinkwise](#)), and that’s a great addition to your activation email, too!

## **Gamification: influence member behavior & achieve business goals**

Gamification is a vital element of strong and dynamic customer communities, especially in the B2B SaaS space, where community topics can be dense with technical information. In order to create and maintain a thriving, interactive space, community managers must find ways to incite this user engagement. Gamification triggers this engagement by creating moments of user gratification which hook community members to keep coming back for more.

But are you using all the tools your community platform offers you in order to create a super engaged user base and loyal members?

Make the most of any features that play on users’ love for rewards, status and ranking, and social validation.

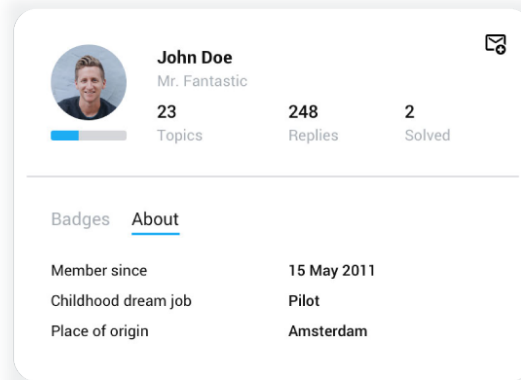
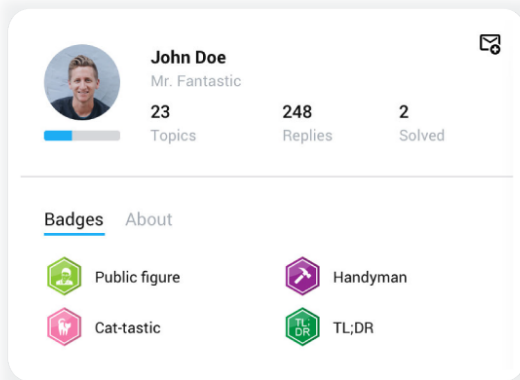
### **Quick refresh: what is gamification?**

In online communities, gamification is used to motivate and engage members by creating playful experiences.

The motivation for community members can be divided into two main categories; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is driven by interest or enjoyment in a task itself, without any external pressure or desire for reward. For example, a member that comes to the community for intrinsic motivations comes because he enjoys participating in a discussion about specific topics.

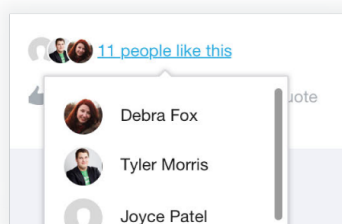
In contrast, extrinsic motivations are triggered by external factors, such as a prize or recognition from others. Community experiences trigger intrinsic motivations, which are then followed by extrinsic motivations, resulting in an increase in engagement from community members, as well as influencing their customer behaviours. When people are participating in a community for both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons, they are much more likely to display high levels of engagement and participation.

Competitions, prizes and gamification systems are a great way to engage members that do not participate, based solely on intrinsic motivations. In other words, gamification enables members to participate not only because the task they are doing is interesting and fun, but also because they are rewarded for it and achieve a certain social status.



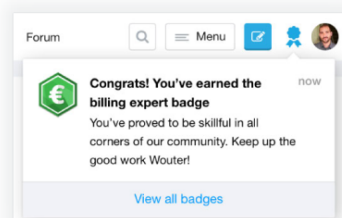
*Gamification tools like user ranks, badges, reputation indicators and likes are great tools to activate users and move them through the funnel*

## Gamification tools for your community



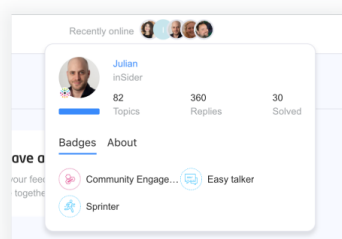
### Likes

Likes are one of the more social elements of a community and a great way for your members to show their appreciation for the contributions of others. Likes give users a feel good factor, especially when they are helping others or adding humor to a discussion.



### Badges

Badges are generally used to highlight the expertise of users, but they can also be used to reward new users' first activities in a fun and light-hearted way. Badges are a very visible element on user profiles and avatars and members love to receive new ones.




### Ranks

Ranks can be used for longer term purposes as they allow you to identify your biggest advocates—who are instrumental for a thriving community. We advise giving members a rank on their first, second and fifth login. When you do this, members are immediately aware of the rank system and can understand that it is based on their level of activity. The steps to climb up the ranks should then get bigger and bigger (and harder and harder!). For example, to get to one of the higher ranks a user should have answered a certain amount of questions. This way, the users with a higher rank have more intrinsic motivations to come back to the community, so more can be asked of them. User ranking is a key community activation tactic.

Creating badges that are directly related to your business goals, for instance, can inspire certain desirable customer behaviour. For example, a service community that wants to reduce the amount of calls for a specific product feature should create an expert badge for that specific feature. The badge will show which other members have expertise in this area, and this builds trust, as people have a higher tendency to trust other members that are using the same product features as them.

Using the rank system to identify users to invite into ideation or co-creation forums is another great way to use gamification to achieve your business goals.

In a nutshell, stimulating members to become more active through gamification results in more content being created and more answers being provided—and see your self-service ratio skyrocket.

 **Pro Tip:** Research (and our gamification expertise!) cautions us against telling members what the exact rules are, especially with user ranks. It is best for the users to be aware that there is a gamification system in place, and that the rewards are based on their level of activity—but not to tell them the exact actions they need to perform in order to earn a badge or increase in rank. Approaching gamification in this way increases your members' anticipation and compels them to 'come back for more'.

## Tips & tricks for re-targeting inactive users

As we can see from the stats in the activation funnel, we lose a serious amount of members who were once active, but for some reason, fell off the radar. The majority of the time, this is because a user joins a community with a specific question in mind, and once they have their answer or advice, they say adieu and leave the community for good.

What can we do to entice these one-time members back for another try? Let's take a look at retargeting inactive users.

You can choose to identify and then target specific groups of your user base and hit them up with new, interesting content. Some community managers choose to check on the activity of their very active members as well, to ensure that they keep coming back to the community. Well, they do say that prevention is better than cure ...

### What should you communicate to users with your reactivation campaign?

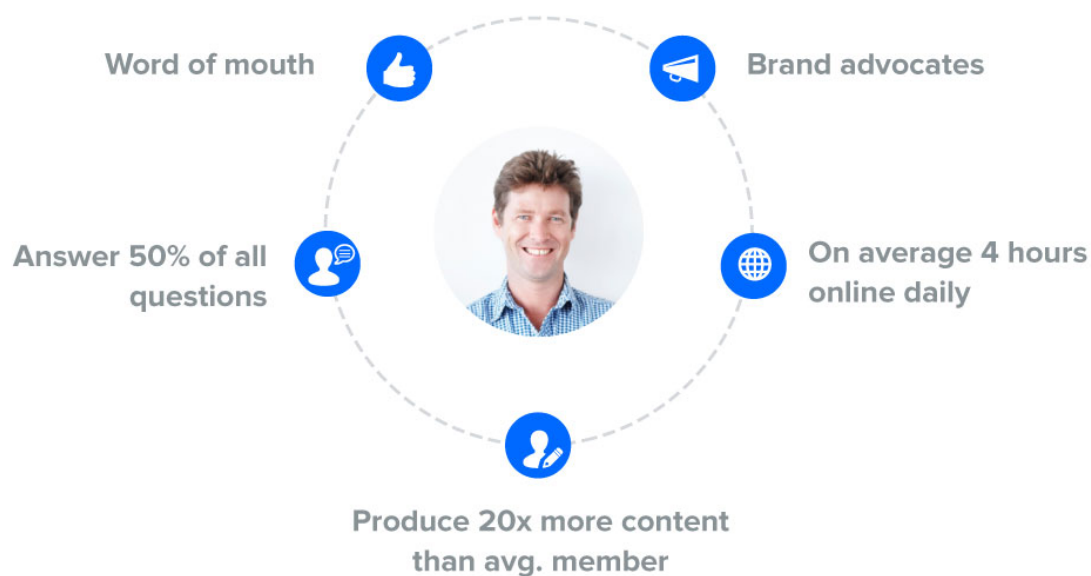
Well, that's going to depend on which group you are targeting:

**Are you targeting lapsed super users?** Then make it very personal and present them with complex, hard questions. They like a challenge and were probably bored by those regular, everyday questions floating around in your community. You can encourage them to share use cases of your product or get more involved in ideation for new features.

**Are you targeting regular users who never have been very active?** Present topics which have generated a large amount of views / likes / comments since their last visit. Also include topics where you are asking the users for feedback—get them involved! The chances are high that there might be something for them to discover as well.

You could also choose to send specific content depending on which category they were previously active in. For example, you could export the data and create segmented reactivation lists based on categories people have posted in. The sky's the limit!

## Introducing a super user initiative: your step-by-step guide




### *Key elements that make up an online community super user*

The strongest communities have a secret ingredient: their super users. Super users are a great source of value for your community. They are quick to respond to questions, great advocates for your brand and they keep your community going. If you haven't already implemented a super user initiative within your software community, now's the time to act!

Here are our pro tips for spotting, recognizing, engaging and retaining the very best super users within your community.


## What makes a potential super user? Here's what to look for:

- ✓ Members who contribute regular, impactful activity to the community (look at the statistics for likes and answers—check your analytics)
- ✓ Members who offer constructive criticism (it's OK to disagree if there's an alternative solution presented)

 **Pro Tip:** When reviewing potential super users, be sure to differentiate helpfulness and kindness from advocacy and brand evangelists

### Once you've spotted a potential super user, acknowledge them:

- Pick a specific post, and start your praise from there
- Make them feel important—appreciate their knowledge (@mentions are great for this)
- Ask for their advice—manage expectations

 **Pro Tip:** To determine whether a member could be a good superuser 'fit' for your brand, do the following:

- Check their contact history—how do they approach your service personnel?
- Stalk their social media—are they 😊 or 😞 ?
- Ask yourself: would you look forward to hanging out with this person for an hour?
- Ultimately, trust your gut feeling and intuition

## Some ideas for making your super users official:

- ✓ Public / formal announcements within the community
- ✓ Offer access to an exclusive, closed area
- ✓ Include them in beta testing groups for upcoming product features so they can give you feedback, and you can get their buy-in, before an update goes live
- ✓ Use a Non Disclosure Agreement to lower your sponsors' stress levels

 **Pro Tip:** How to keep your super users active and engaged:

- Value their insights and ideas—but remember to manage expectations
- Make friends—get to know them as people, not just super users
- When someone is MIA, reach out, respect their time and assist where you can

Having a super user program provides a number of benefits for the rest of your community member base. If it's a formal, openly communicated program, it gives engaged users something to aspire towards—acting as a strong incentive for them to up their activity and step from one activation funnel level to the next.

Your super user program also benefits those new and less active members. They'll benefit from 'guaranteed' assistance outside of your company's regular office hours—often 24/7 when you have a globally distributed member base. Often your super users will answer questions for others, allowing your customers to self-serve and drastically reducing the pressure on your support teams. In fact, our B2B communities see up to 70% peer-to-peer engagement, which can reduce your support costs by up to 50%! Check out our case study on to find out how software company Infoland have done just that.

## Suggested super user program activities:

- ✓ Celebrate each super user's milestones e.g. 1000 posts, 100 likes, 100 answers)
- ✓ Celebrate calendar occasions, like birthdays or community membership anniversaries
- ✓ Schedule regular video chats, with or without an agenda, to strengthen the relationship and gain valuable feedback and insights on your community
- ✓ Schedule occasional on-site or face-to-face meetings to help super users feel part of a time and more connected with your brand



### Final pro tips for your super user program:

- Always be honest, transparent, and genuine with your super users. They are switched on individuals!
- Never demand activity or tasks from super users—always offer options and suggestions
- Remember that your community's "top" users are not always by default "super" users

While your super users of course have one key thing in common—your product—always remember that they are different people with different personalities, and they will often have varied views on the topics discussed within your community. An approach that works very well for one may not work at all for someone else, so bear this in mind when building your super user program and remember to incorporate that one key element: flexibility.

# Analytics & Integrations

## The three different types of community analytics

Your community is in place to help your organization achieve its business goals, right? Right! That means you're going to have to measure and report back on how it's doing in relation to those goals. Remember to bear in mind that what you both measure and analyze will depend on your own business goals and the aims of your community. For example, if reducing pressure on customer support is the main goal of your community, % reduction in support costs may be your main KPI. If retention is your priority, you'll want to focus on customer engagement metrics. Or, if your community's goal is to gain feedback and generate customer ideas to improve

your product, measuring the % of customer suggestions that are implemented by your product team might be your main metric.

Whatever your goals are, here are some community management best practices when it comes to analytics and reporting:

### **First of all, don't panic!**

Community analytics isn't something to be afraid of. Reporting can really help to draw useful insights for your team and boost community growth. Not knowing who your most active users are, or being unaware of the results of campaigns and other community activities is a sure-fire way to waste your team's resources and miss out on great opportunities to improve the overall health of your community. Not to mention that you'll be unable to rave about your blinding success to the stakeholder team if you're not measuring it!

**At a basic level, we recommend distinguishing between three different types of community analytics:**

1. **Community growth,**
2. **Community value, and**
3. **Community ROI.**



*The 3 basic types of community analysis: growth, value & ROI*

**Let's take a look at these three types of community analytics in a little more detail:**

#### **1. Community growth**

It may sound pretty self-explanatory, but first of all, your community needs to grow healthily. This means that you should have plenty of visitors, content and activity.

#### **2. Community value**

You may think it goes without saying that the content within your community should be valuable to both your customers and your organization, but it's surprising how much 'junk' can build up over time. This is particularly true in the B2B software space, where regular feature updates mean community information can become out of date quicker than you realise—remember, clean up your community!

### 3. Community ROI

In the end, you need to be aware of both your community growth and your community value in order to determine what kind of ROI you are getting.

**Pro Tip:** Communities that are intended to serve many purposes—sales, service, and product ideation all in one—all too often fail. Too many stakeholders with conflicting objectives spell disaster for a community. Start small, achieve success, and only then expand your community objectives.

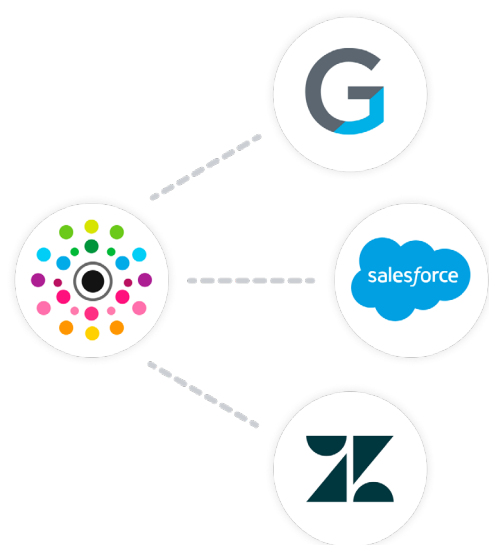
Remember to focus on the concept of impact and not solely on direct ROI. This is particularly pertinent for if your goal is to scale your Customer Success effectively and efficiently by increasing customer engagement through your community. In this case, the business impact is likely to be an increase in more engaged, satisfied and successful customers, who even become brand advocates that rave about your product.

We recommend when compiling your community report(s) to make use of a combination of your community platform's native analytics as well as any external analytics tools you have access to. Google Analytics is a key port-of-call that shouldn't be overlooked (bonus: it's free and easy to use), but some community teams also utilize analytics tools such as Adobe Analytics (formerly Omniture), Mixpanel, Pendo and social listening tooling like Coosto or Brandwatch.

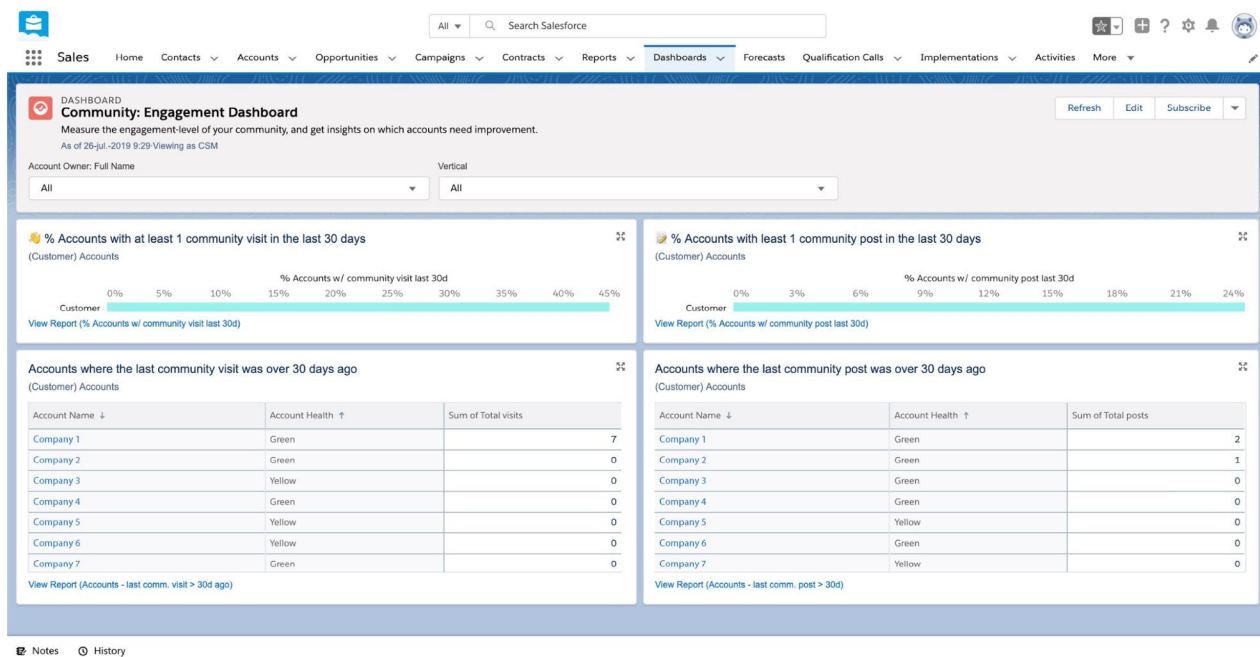
## Integrations

Another key way to ensure you get the most from your online community (and its data!) is to integrate it with your other Support and Success platforms.

Look for a platform that seamlessly integrates with ticketing tools such as Zendesk (allowing you to easily escalate tricky tickets from your community to your support team) and your CRM (e.g. Salesforce or Gainsight). This gives you a holistic, 360-degree view of the customer, providing you with a wealth of data, from engagement metrics to customer sentiment at both account and contact level.



Here is an example of the customer engagement metrics you can tap into when using Gainsight's Salesforce integration:



*Some examples of engagement dashboards available with Gainsight's Salesforce integration*

Here's a list of metrics you can use to evaluate your Customer Success community. Get inspired!



#### Traffic metrics:

- Number of unique visitors per timeframe
- Number of page views per timeframe
- % new vs returning visitors



#### Activity metrics:

- Registrations per timeframe
- Conversion percentages of members moving through the activation funnel stages
- Posts created per timeframe / category
- Topics created per timeframe / category
- Topics created per type (e.g. question, discussion) per timeframe / category
- Private messages sent per timeframe
- Private messages sent / received per moderator per timeframe
- Number of moderator actions performed per timeframe
- Logins per timeframe
- Average posts per user per timeframe



### **Community value metrics:**

- Number of created topics / posts per timeframe
- Number of posts marked as ‘best answer’
- Number of answered questions
- Growth in engaged members and superusers
- Average time spent on the community
- Landing page and behavior flow
- Search queries performed within the community
- Peer-to-peer activity (number of posts answered by non-employees vs employees)
- Liveliness: average posts per day, per category or topic
- Number of community highlighted problems
- Number of community highlighted opportunities
- Customer satisfaction results for community members vs non-members
- Percentage improvement in brand awareness
- Increase in brand loyalty
- Percentage improvement in social mentions
- Customer referrals via community
- NPS scores
- Efficiency of super users (questions/answers)



### **Community ROI metrics**

- Number customer service calls deflected
- Reduction in customer service call handling times
- Reduction in customer service headcount
- Reduction in new customer onboarding/implementation costs
- Increased customer retention rates
- Increase in employee productivity
- Increased new customer conversion rates
- Reduction in advertising budget / SEO costs
- Community exit survey results



**Pro Tip:** Maximize your ability to prove community value and impact by enabling non-registered users to perform basic social interactions such as liking posts. Our research suggests that of the 90 - 95% of community visitors who never register, 38% nevertheless found community content helpful. Make sure you can track this enormous boost in proof-of-value by giving those swathes of non-registered visitors to opportunity to give your content a thumbs up.

# Driving traffic & SEO-proofing your community

## How online communities impact your organization's SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a complex beast and it's simply not possible to cover absolutely everything here—but what we are going to do is cover the importance of SEO-proofing your community content and give you some best practices to follow so that your community can become a huge traffic-driver for your company!

There are a few key reasons community content generates such superb SEO results.

### 1. Communities generate more relevant content

One of the key things Google takes into consideration when ranking content for SEO is user relevance—their algorithm essentially attempts to 'think like a user'. Who better to create content relevant to users than the users themselves?! Think helpful, relevant content written by users, for users.

### 2. Communities generate regular, fresh content

Next to relevance, Google's algorithm absolutely loves fresh, new content. Recent content with social characteristics (such as from a community) prompts search engines to crawl your pages and get you ranking higher, faster. Let your community members do some of your B2B marketing heavy-lifting just by navigating and interacting within the community pages!

### 3. Communities help identify and generate new keywords

Because your community members are talking about topics that are important, relevant and interesting to them, new pages are being created with different keyword variations (hopefully!) every single day. This increases the opportunity for new, organic search traffic to find what they are looking for on your community pages.

### 4. Communities generate cross-links

You may be aware that one very important factor of Google's SEO ranking algorithm is your site's linking structure. Back-links, cross-links, deep-links—you name it, Google loves 'em all! And guess what contributes to an enormous number of links across your online properties? Your online community, of course.

# Traffic drivers for your community

## Traffic distribution for young vs. mature communities



## Driving traffic with integrations

We've talked about [SEO-proofing your content](#), and hopefully you're now feeling confident about how to get your content really working for you by bringing more and more members to your community.

But there are other cool tactics to drive maximum traffic to your community and activate as many new members as possible. By integrating your community content across your existing digital assets such as your corporate website, static FAQ pages or product app, you get to target customers right at the heart of their user journey and bring them over to your community to enhance their experience.

Integrations are crucial for the success of your community. The more you can integrate your community content across the different digital touchpoints of your customer's journey, the more traffic you can send to the community and—ultimately—the more value the community will bring to your B2B organization. Integrating with your ticketing systems, such as Zendesk, allows you to easily escalate tricky community questions to your support staff. Additionally, integrating with a CRM like Gainsight and Salesforce gives you a wealth of data on customer engagement, behaviour and sentiment—helping you to predict churn and create measurable Customer Success KPIs.

Depending upon your community platform, you'll have the option to implement three different types of integration: static, dynamic, and interactive.

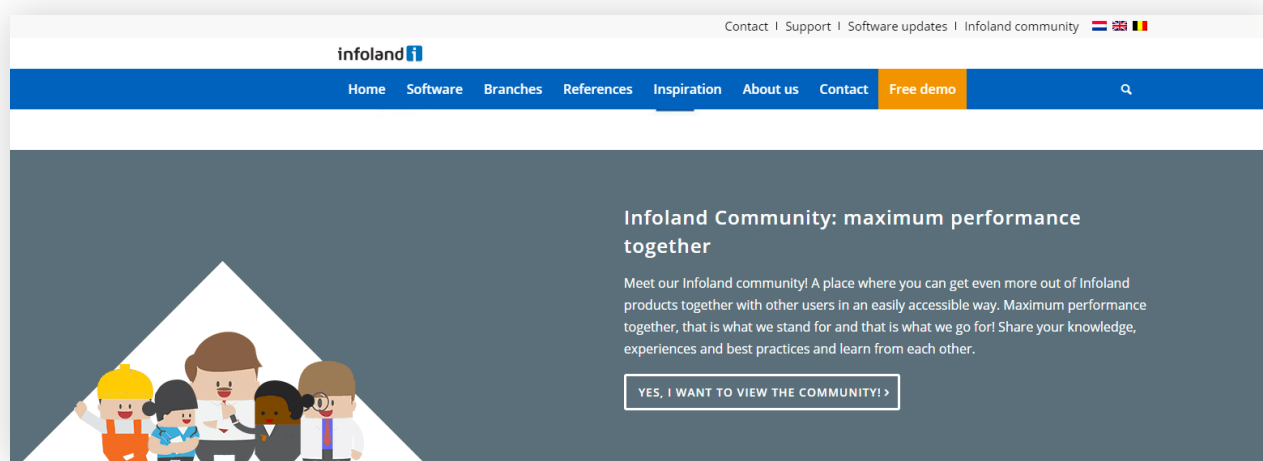
**Static integrations** are the easiest to enable as they're reliant only on basic HTML edits. Some examples of static integrations might include: buttons, navigation links, banners and explanation blocks. No real-time data or interactive functionality is used with static integrations. That said, they can create a lot of value and are instrumental in driving traffic to your community. By incorporating a forum button in the header navigation or by adding an icon that represents the community next to other contact channels, your visitors are much more

likely to navigate to the community.

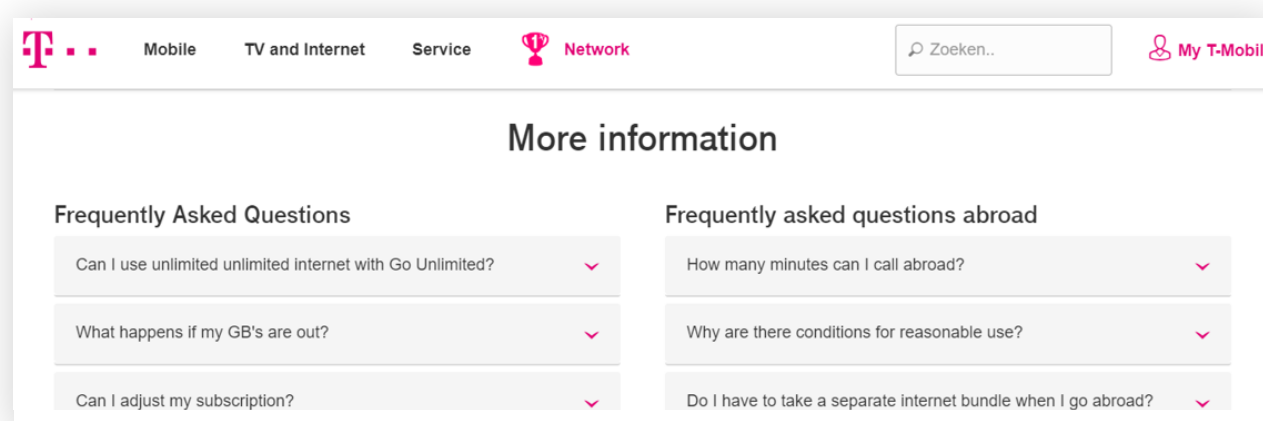
**Dynamic integrations** are relatively more complex to develop in comparison to static integrations. However, they offer a huge pay-off by allowing you to integrate community content onto your website pages. Think, for example, of a pop-out embeddable widget making product-specific help topics or how-to tutorials available on individual product pages.

**Interactive integrations** go one step further by allowing community content to be shown based on user activity—for example by offering community topics and posts within search results, or by allowing users to actually interact with community content outside of the community itself, thanks to API-integrations.

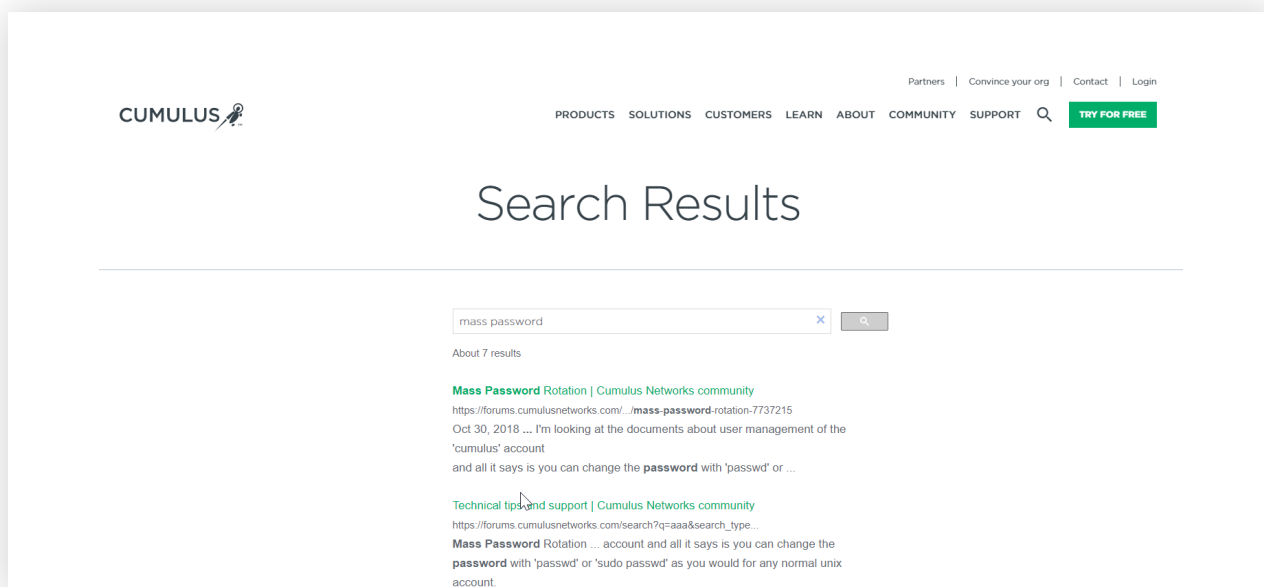
You'll need a community platform with an accessible API in order to implement dynamic and interactive integrations, as they require contextual and real-time data to be pulled from within the community itself.



*Example of a static community integration from software company, Infoland*



*Example of a dynamic community integration — community content is pulled in to FAQs.*



*Example of an interactive community integration form networking software, Cumulus*

Above all, you should look at integrations as powerful tools to generate a constant flow of traffic towards your community. We've compiled a list of some powerful integrations you can implement for your own community to maximize its potential. Some of these are relatively basic while others are particularly potent.

## Community integrations

Where	How	Type	Why it works
Integration with your email newsletter	Custom HTML within your email template	Static	A banner or small piece of text within your customer emails introduces your community as a new channel for customers to ask questions, give feedback and learn
Integration with your corporate website homepage	Update the header or footer of your site	Static	A link pointing towards the community sends website visitors with questions to the right destination
Integration on your support channel contact page	Display the community as a separate - and significant - support channel	Static	Recommend that users consult the community with an icon, text & link, and present the advantages of using the community over your other support channels (e.g. quicker response times)
Integration on your support channel homepage	Update the header or footer of your support homepage	Static	A link pointing towards the community sends website visitors with questions to the right destination
Integration via your support channel emails	Custom HTML within your email template, or link within your email signatures	Static	Recommend that users consult the community with an icon, text & link, and present the advantages of using the community over your other support channels (e.g. quicker response times)

Where	How	Type	Why it works
Integrate with Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems	Refer callers to customer support to check the community for answers first	Static	Recommend that callers access the community for a wide range of answers and 24/7 availability
Integrate community links on product pages	Add customized and specific links to the community on product pages (e.g. "How to get started with your new iPhone")	Static	Give site traffic a call-to-action to join the community and learn more from peer experts
Integrate community on FAQ pages	Add dynamic links to community content at the end of each FAQ	Dynamic	Link at the end of a FAQ - "Still looking for an answer? Visit our community" gives visitors a clear next step for service queries. Dynamically serve links to relevant FAQ-related topics
Integrate community content in support search results	Display relevant community content alongside company-curated content in search results on the support page	Interactive	Give users searching the support pages a rich range of answers and content that solves their challenge
Integrate community content in homepage search	Display relevant community content alongside company-curated content in search results on the homepage	Interactive	Give users searching the site a wide range of content and compel them to join the community
Integrate your community in your support documentation and user manuals	Add static links to relevant community articles or tutorials within user materials and online manuals	Static	Help users get more out of their product or service by linking to helpful community content
Integrate community content in your registration Emails	Include links to getting started tutorials or posts within the community when you send a welcome email to new users	Static	Refer newly registered customers to the community for their onboarding questions and help manage post-purchase dissonance
Integrate community content onto your support contact page	Display helpful community content on the support channel contact page	Dynamic	Show popular topics and recent discussions on the support channel page to send traffic to the community and reduce calls to your support channel
Integrate community content on your product pages	Display dynamic content-specific community content on product pages based on context	Dynamic	Enhance your customer experience and drive traffic to the community by showcasing popular context-specific community content on your product pages

Where	How	Type	Why it works
Integrate your community on printed materials and invoices	Incorporate a link and call-to-action to help articles or tutorials on printed customer materials like invoices	Static	Reduce burden on customer contact channels by referring customers to your community to get their questions answered

## Measuring integration success

With some integrations more complex than others to implement and maintain, it's important to measure integration success so that you can focus your efforts on the areas that are the strongest traffic-drivers for your community. Traffic analysis tools such as Google Analytics or Adobe Analytics work well for gathering data and analysing user behavior across the full customer journey—so they give you a good overview of how your static integrations are performing for you.



**Pro Tip:** ensure your inbound community links have the correct UTM tags. Without these, your analytics tool will be unable to give you an overview of where your community traffic is coming from.

## Cover all bases: Inspiration for your Ts & Cs

**Don't risk landing yourself or your product's reputation in hot water. Here are some general elements that we always recommend you include in your community guidelines:**

### 1. General guidelines / code of conduct

You want your users to understand clearly which behaviour is allowed on the community, and which is not. Things to include are:


- No abusive behaviour towards other users (e.g. insults / threats / racism / harassment)
- No off-topic discussion / intentional derailing of discussions
- No multiple registrations
- No commercial advertisement
- No sharing of illegal content
- No Spam / soliciting
- No public discussion of community staff action / communication

### 2. Liability for shared information

Make sure that users understand that information taken from your community does not necessarily have to be correct, and that they have to use this information carefully. Emphasise that no damages resulting from information taken from your community can be held against your company.

### 3. Removing content / banning users

Your community team has the right to remove content from the community, should it feel that this is necessary. The same goes for restricting access to the community (banning users). Include the email address of your community team here, so that users can email you if they disagree with an action from the community team.

 **Pro Tip:** You can mention here that you will only take these actions to protect the positive experience of other users on the community.

#### 4. Links to third party websites

This is simply a hygiene factor nowadays. Make it clear that you are not responsible for any material on other websites that your team or other users on your community are linking to.

#### 5. Cookie policy

Users want to be aware of how their data is being used. Your community platform provider should provide you with a standard cookie policy you can adapt and use.

#### 6. Community availability

Some communities decide to include this item to explain that they cannot guarantee availability, but it can also be used to forbid people attempting to break or ‘hack’ the community and its functionality, or simply to inform them that you cannot be held responsible for any costs incurred from using the platform (e.g. from their internet provider).

Looking for more community legalese inspiration? Check out these examples of B2B software companies doing it right:

[AIMMS Terms & Conditions](#)

[Thinkwise Terms & Conditions](#)

[Streamlabs Terms & Conditions](#)

## What have we learned?

Communities have the power, when well managed, to help B2B software companies scale Customer Success effectively—from improving customer support and reducing tickets to helping you build a better product through customer feedback and ideation.

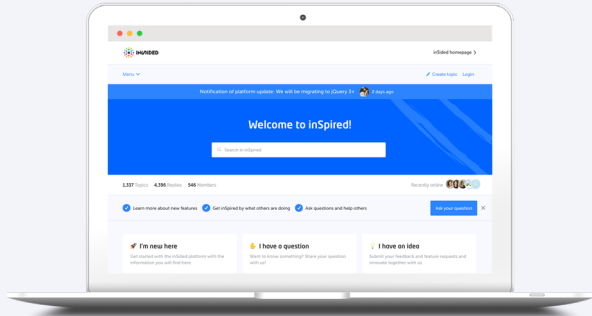
#### **Some clear takeaways to put into action:**

- Get clear on your community concept, goals, and objectives so you know where you’re headed from the get-go
- Create your content strategy and work a solid publication plan

- Start small and grow fast by reaching out, connecting and motivating members
- Supercharge your SEO by optimizing and pruning old content
- Maintain your reputation by managing negative users effectively
- Use gamification to activate your members and achieve business goals
- Measure your community content performance—regularly!— and pay attention to growth, value and ROI
- Drive sizable traffic using proven SEO techniques and valuable integrations
- CYA with the legal stuff

**[Book a demo with Gainsight](#)** today and see how we can scale Customer Success and Support while adding real value for you, and your users.

Of course, we have a whole heap of other resources dedicated to helping community managers just like you build and manage effective, impactful brand communities that have a significant impact on business performance.



**We can't wait to show you around.**

Book your Gainsight demo quickly and easily today.

**Get a demo →**

## ABOUT GAINSIGHT

Gainsight's innovative platform helps companies of all sizes and industries drive durable growth through customer-led, product-led, and community-led strategies. It offers a powerful set of customer success, product experience, and community engagement solutions that together enable businesses to scale efficiently, create alignment, and put the customer at the heart of innovation. With Gainsight, it's never been easier to drive acquisition, increase product adoption, prevent churn, and grow with renewals and expansion. Learn how leading companies such as GE Digital, SAP Concur, and Box use Gainsight at [www.gainsight.com](http://www.gainsight.com).

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