



RIGHTNOW GUIDE:
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
BEST PRACTICES

Version 0.7

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ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE

Assuming you already have both an existing RightNow Community and a basic working knowledge of the RightNow Community solution, this Tune-Up package should take about one hour of focused time to complete. Additional time of up to 20 hours (or more) may be needed to implement any changes to your community configuration based upon insights discovered during this Tune-Up.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This document is intended to help RightNow Community customers make continuous improvements to their community environments. It should be used in conjunction with the Community Engagement Tune-Up Checklist. We recommend that you read this paper and work through the checklist before reviewing the findings with your RightNow Client Success Manager.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Communities are dynamic environments, which means success can be a moving target. Simply launching one is not enough to create value for your company or your customers. Activity can wane (or get out of hand) without ongoing attention to how you promote, manage, and moderate the community.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM THROUGH BEST PRACTICES

For the past several years, our RightNow Community experts—community architects, community managers, and community strategists—have been working with dozens of companies on developing and nurturing successful communities. In the process, we have collected and honed a number of best practices proven to boost community engagement. These practice areas are designed to help you maintain a healthy member base while keeping the community in alignment with your organizational goals and policies.

1) Make it easy to find

If your customers can't find your community, then they can't use it! In addition to an organized marketing program to promote your community (which goes beyond the scope of this Tune-Up), we recommend following these best practices to make sure that customers who may be interested in your community can actually locate it.

Best Practice: Prominently display a link to the community on your website (Figure 1).

Benefit: Having a prominent link (within the top-level navigation if possible) helps to direct customers who are interested in using the community to the right place.

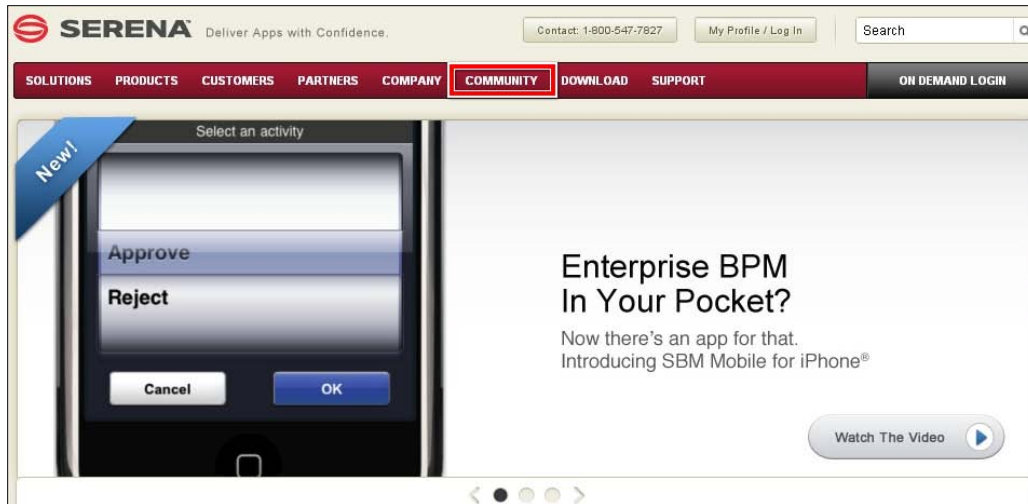


Figure 1: Serena Software prominently features their community in the top level navigation of their website.

Best Practice: Allow visitors to view community content without logging in, but require them to login to participate.

Benefit: Allowing at least a portion of your community to be accessed without a login will foster significant engagement with existing or potential customers. We still recommend you protect *contribution* to your community with a login to enforce adherence to your community policies.

Best Practice: Ensure that Google and Bing can accurately index your community content (Figure 2).

Benefit: If your community is indexed by the major web search engines, this will greatly increase the ability of customers to find your content as many customers prefer to do a web search before trying anything else.

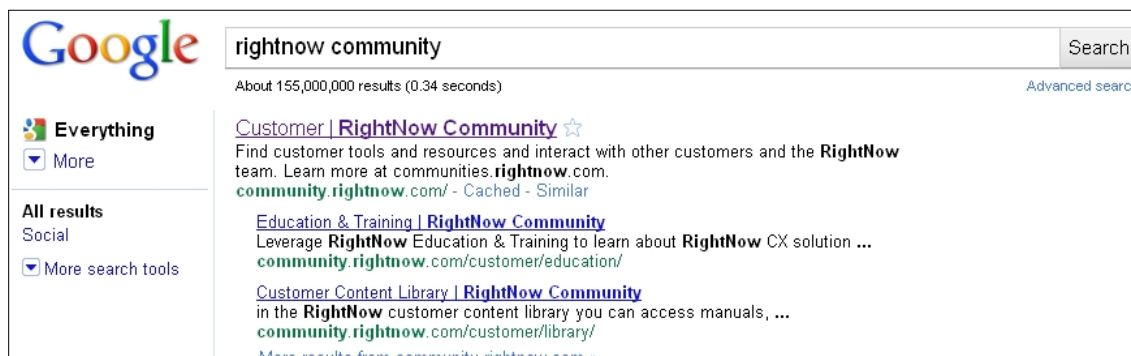


Figure 2: The RightNow Community is the first item that comes up in this relevant search.

2) Properly organize your community

Intuitive organization of your community will not only ensure that members are able to easily navigate it, but will also minimize potential maintenance headaches down the road.

We sometimes see companies start by building a grand community “field of dreams”—hoping that if they build it, the customers will come. This approach almost always fails. Instead, we recommend that you start small with a simple and general community structure and expand or specialize the structure as you grow.

Best Practice: Add welcome panels on key pages to help people get started (Figure 3).

Benefit: These panels provide context to the user by letting them know where they are and what they can do at their current location.



Figure 3: CloroxConnects displays a welcome panel that is easy to follow and helps orient members.

Best Practice: Use one post type per hive(a hive a community area or space), and use this post type across similar hives (Figure 4).

Benefit: We commonly see clients use too many post types, which not only makes it more difficult for members to understand the difference between types, but also creates more work for you if you ever need to move a thread with a different post type.

IMPORTANT: Not following this best practice can cause a substantial maintenance problem for you in the future.



Figure 4: This example shows how overly-specific post types (idea, item, note, etc.) might be adapted into a single all-encompassing post type.

Best Practice: Rename the system term “hive” with more generic terminology that fits your community (such as areas, spaces, or resources) (Figure 5).

Benefit: Adapting the terminology to the customer will provide a better user experience.

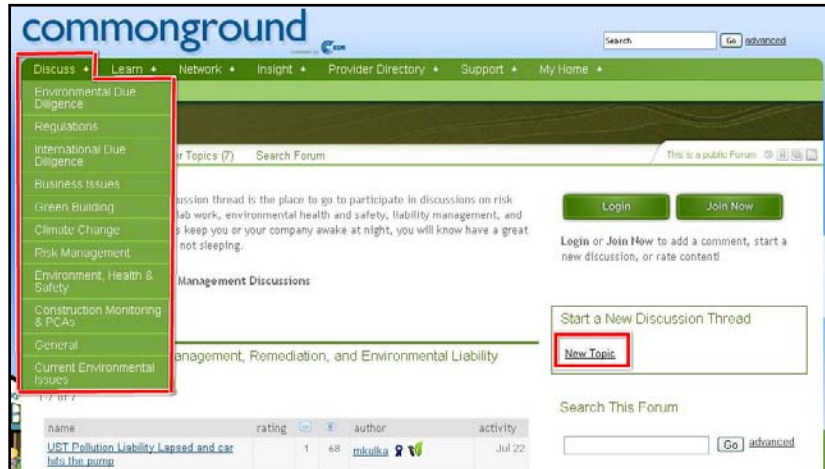


Figure 5: CommonGround uses the same “Topic” post type across all of their discussion forums. This single post type makes it easy to move threads between different hives.

Best Practice: Consider removing any areas of your community that have not had activity in a three- to six-month period (Figure 6).

Benefit: Doing this will make the community feel more active and inviting, which improves member engagement.

Beginning Photography Questions						
share tips and tutorials for better photos						
Forum Home Archive (11) Settings Admin						
Posts						
1-11 of 11						
type	name	rating		author	activity	
Topic	Tips For Traveling with SLR's - Yosemite Park and...	3	14	Sean	9/1 3/09	
Topic	best way to learn photography		3	Molly	9/1 3/09	
Topic	New camera for a mom		4	Camille	9/1 3/09	
Topic	which point & shoot would you recommend me?		0	Adam	9/1 3/09	
Topic	Low contrast when facing the sun		1	Molly	9/1 3/09	
Topic	How to use a circular polarizer?		6	Camille	9/1 3/09	
Topic	UV or Clear Protection		3	Adam	9/1 3/09	
Topic	question on ISO settings (same for all cameras?)		4	Sean	9/1 3/09	
Topic	Difficulty in retaining true colour and sharpness of GREEN...		0	Sean	9/1 3/09	
Topic	Explanation of lens terminology		3	Molly	9/1 3/09	
Topic	Why can't I find my perfect camera? Please help		5	Camille	9/1 3/09	

Figure 6: The posts in this inactive area “Beginning Photography Questions,” might need to be rolled up into a more general forum: “Photography Questions.”

Best Practice: Display the Twitter stream (or other real-time social media activity) of your community members (Figure 7).

Benefit: Displaying this activity adds value to the community both by drawing attention to your very active members (which helps them feel important and appreciated), but also by making the community even more current and up-to-date.

TIP: Find people to connect with by browsing through their user profiles to see who is sharing links to their blog, website, Twitter, or LinkedIn. People who share this information in their profiles are inviting interaction and will almost always be receptive to further engagement.

The screenshot displays a community management dashboard. On the left, under 'Meet our newest user groups', there is a grid of 12 group icons with labels such as 'Iowa Flex', 'Fairfield County Adobe Users Group', 'Evansville Indiana Adobe User Group', 'Phoenix Lightroom User Group', 'Boeing Flex User Group', 'NW Arkansas Adobe User Group', 'FUTURE', 'Inland Empire Media User Group', 'the Australia and New Zealand Adobe Community', 'Campeche Alliance', 'chinese student club', and 'Photoshop London User Group'. Below this grid is a section for 'Upcoming CS5 Community events' listing a June 15 event in Los Angeles. On the right, 'Upcoming Flash Camps' shows an event for July 8, 2010. The bottom right features a 'Twitter' stream titled 'The Adobe Community as seen on Twitter' with several tweets, including one from @androidcentral about AdMob and another from nsdevaraj about PayPal. A red rectangular border highlights the Twitter stream.

Figure 7: Adobe Group's community manager maintains and displays this list highlighting the Twitter activity of her community members.

Best Practice: Give users a clear call to action (Figure 8).

Benefit: Words such as Post, Share, Ask, Start, Add, View, Subscribe, Vote, and Preview will help to improve the usability of your site by making it clear what action can be taken.

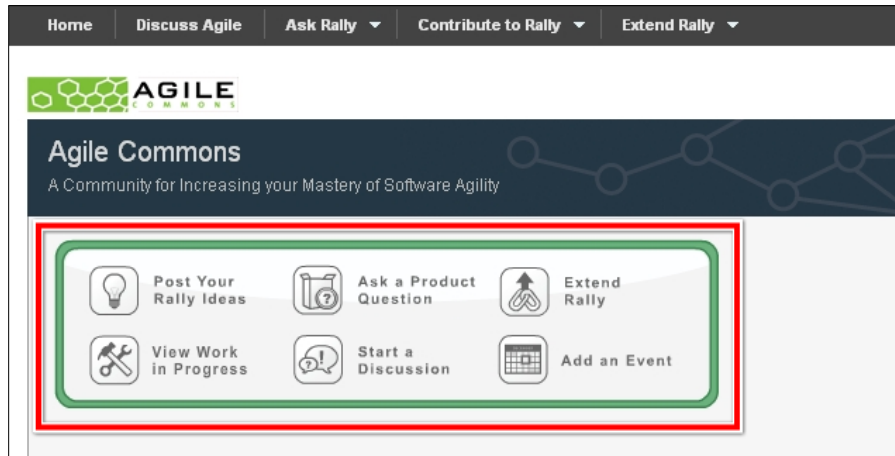


Figure 8: Agile Commons uses active verbs in all six of its top-level interactions.

Best Practice: If you have long pages of content, add a custom footer that mirrors your top-level navigation (Figure 9).

Benefit: This change provides a natural segue for additional interaction as well as helping to minimize the scrolling required.

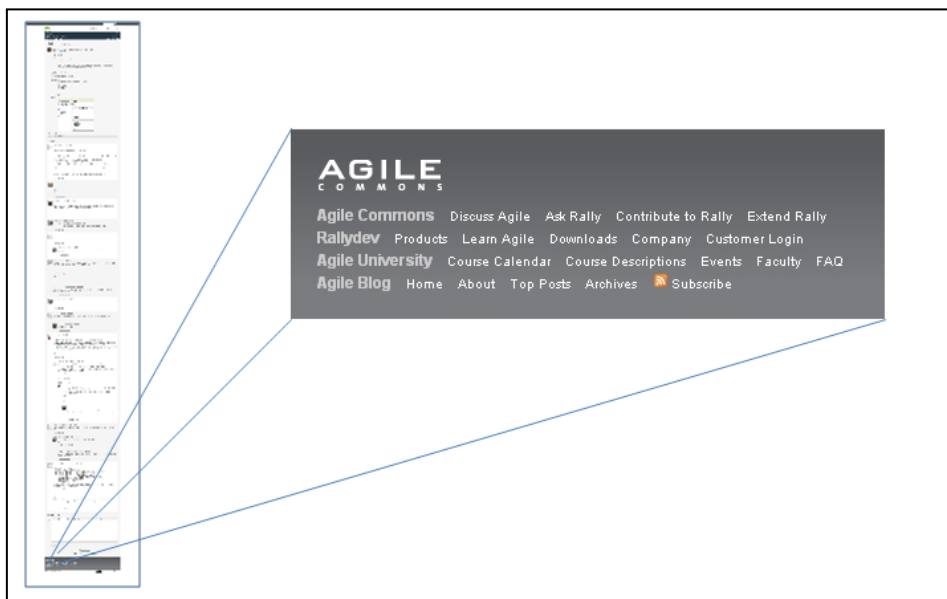


Figure 9: Agile Commons uses a custom footer that mirrors its top-level navigation. This improves the usability of their tall posts that have many comments.

3) Specify the policies for your community

These policies provide the real “meat” of what goes on in your community. Guidelines and Terms & Conditions help to define what kind of behavior is encouraged, what is discouraged, what is never acceptable, and what risks are associated with participating.

Best Practice: Include a public *Legal Terms and Conditions* page which covers topics such as: spam, intellectual property, and sharing of personal information (Figure 10).

Benefit: This page helps to ensure that your company and its members are legally protected.

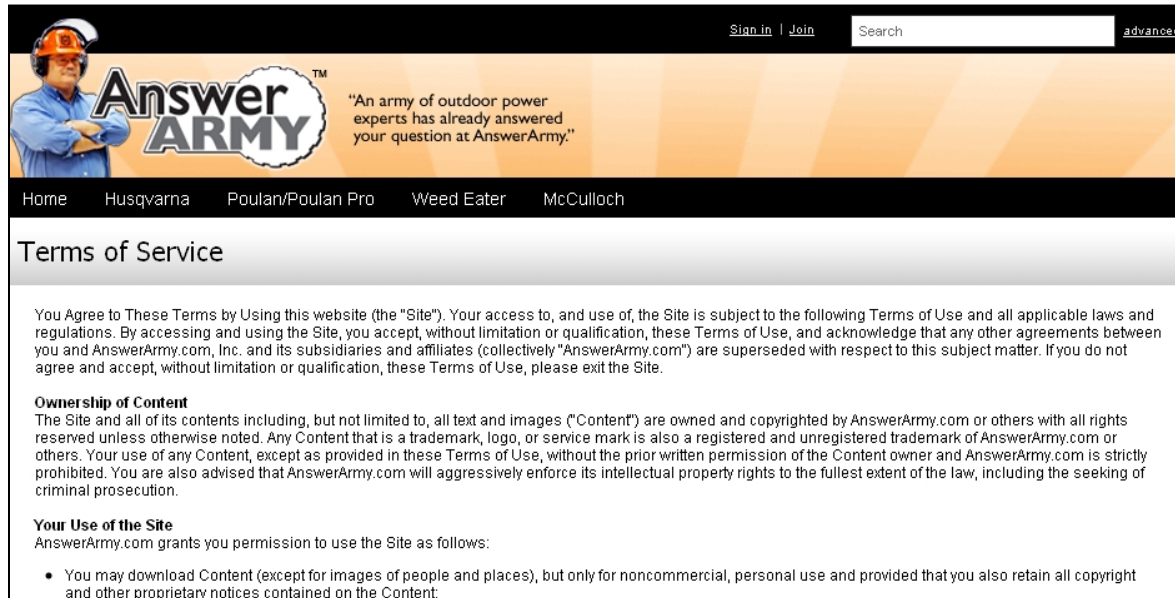
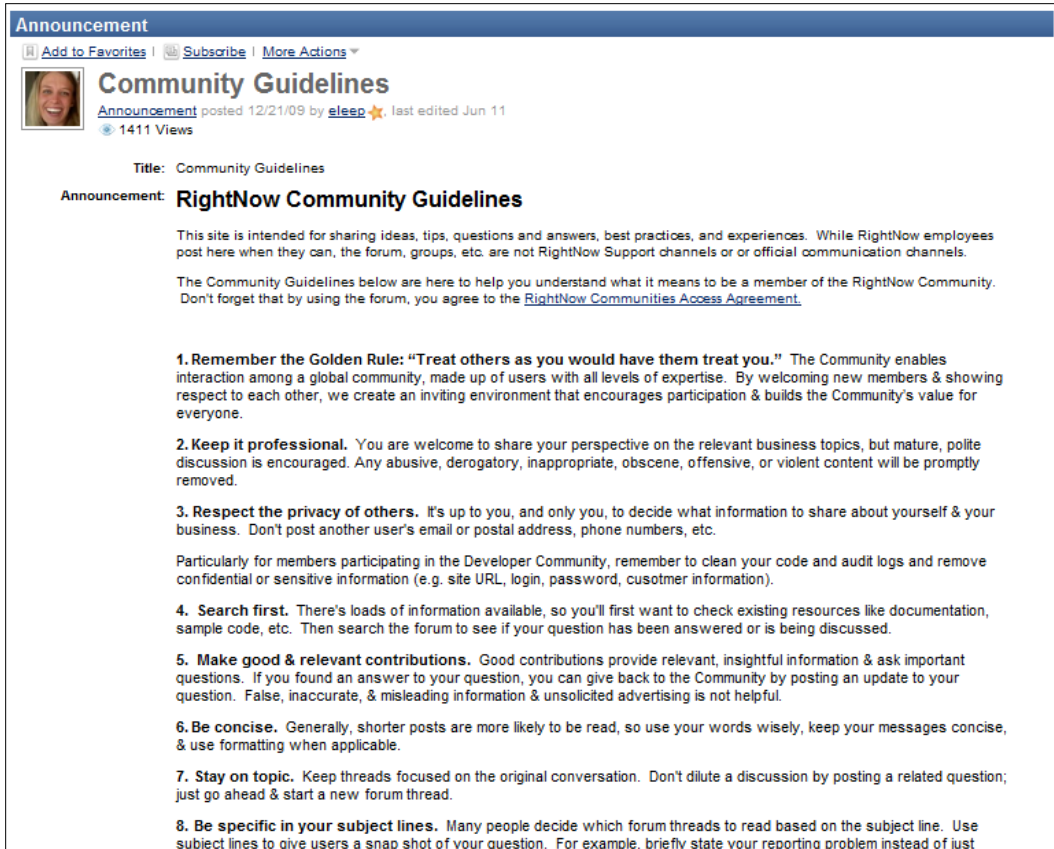


Figure 10: AnswerArmy features a link to the Terms of Service in the community's footer.


Best Practice: Include a public *Community Participation Guidelines* page which defines your community culture (Figure 11).

Benefit: This document is an important step to ensuring healthy and productive member behavior. It also allows the community moderator, to cultivate, and enforce the desired community culture.



Announcement

[Add to Favorites](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [More Actions](#)

 **Community Guidelines**
 Announcement posted 12/21/09 by [eleep](#) ⭐ last edited Jun 11
 1411 Views

Title: Community Guidelines

Announcement: **RightNow Community Guidelines**

This site is intended for sharing ideas, tips, questions and answers, best practices, and experiences. While RightNow employees post here when they can, the forum, groups, etc. are not RightNow Support channels or official communication channels.

The Community Guidelines below are here to help you understand what it means to be a member of the RightNow Community. Don't forget that by using the forum, you agree to the [RightNow Communities Access Agreement](#).

- 1. Remember the Golden Rule:** "Treat others as you would have them treat you." The Community enables interaction among a global community, made up of users with all levels of expertise. By welcoming new members & showing respect to each other, we create an inviting environment that encourages participation & builds the Community's value for everyone.
- 2. Keep it professional.** You are welcome to share your perspective on the relevant business topics, but mature, polite discussion is encouraged. Any abusive, derogatory, inappropriate, obscene, offensive, or violent content will be promptly removed.
- 3. Respect the privacy of others.** It's up to you, and only you, to decide what information to share about yourself & your business. Don't post another user's email or postal address, phone numbers, etc.
 Particularly for members participating in the Developer Community, remember to clean your code and audit logs and remove confidential or sensitive information (e.g. site URL, login, password, customer information).
- 4. Search first.** There's loads of information available, so you'll first want to check existing resources like documentation, sample code, etc. Then search the forum to see if your question has been answered or is being discussed.
- 5. Make good & relevant contributions.** Good contributions provide relevant, insightful information & ask important questions. If you found an answer to your question, you can give back to the Community by posting an update to your question. False, inaccurate, & misleading information & unsolicited advertising is not helpful.
- 6. Be concise.** Generally, shorter posts are more likely to be read, so use your words wisely, keep your messages concise, & use formatting when applicable.
- 7. Stay on topic.** Keep threads focused on the original conversation. Don't dilute a discussion by posting a related question; just go ahead & start a new forum thread.
- 8. Be specific in your subject lines.** Many people decide which forum threads to read based on the subject line. Use subject lines to give users a snap shot of your question. For example, briefly state your reporting problem instead of just

Figure 11: The RightNow Community Guidelines define the culture of RightNow's community.

4) Cultivate and reward good behavior

It isn't enough to define the culture of your community; you also have to perform day-to-day activities to encourage customers to be part of this culture, build trust between your company and its members, and otherwise foster good behavior.

Best Practice: If a problem occurs and it is your fault, acknowledge the problem, apologize for it, and communicate how you are going to act to make it better. This approach represents the AAA Framework (Figure 12).

Benefit: Taking responsibility for mistakes will minimize the chance that a problem will get out of hand and spill into other social media channels which could damage your brand.

The Three A's

1. *Acknowledge*. Start an apology by telling the person that you accept that something happened "I didn't meet my deadline."
2. *Apologize*. Make sure you clearly and simply say that you're sorry, with *no excuses* tacked on. "I'm sorry, Ellie."
3. *Act*. Explain what you'll do to improve or rectify the situation. "I've finished the work now and will better scope my time next time."

These simple steps, done in this order and sincerely, will make a world of difference.

Figure 12: The Three A's Framework, as described in *Trust Agents* by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith.

Best Practice: Handle violations to your community policies in a professional manner (Figure 13).

Benefit: Enforcing policies in a constructive manner will ensure that they are followed, and that members do not feel alienated.

Hi Joe,

How's it going? Hope you're doing well.

I wanted to send you a quick note, regarding the idea that you recently posted in the Idea Lab. First of all, thanks for taking the time to share your idea with us! We value your input and are excited to have customers collaborating together to help RightNow identify and prioritize ways that we can improve the RightNow CX solution. Also, on a housekeeping note, we ask folks to post their ideas/questions to the best location, instead of to multiple locations (see the complete Community Guidelines here: <http://communities.rightnow.com/posts/ac01cfe37a>) in an effort to keep the community organized (e.g. prevent duplicate postings & disparate discussions, undermine purpose of having different forum boards).

In light of this, I left your idea in the Customer Idea Lab (<http://communities.rightnow.com/posts/5ec0831d08>) and removed this idea from the Developer Idea Lab.

Please let me know if you have any questions or feedback.

Thanks again for your participation, and keep those ideas coming!

Best,
Erica Leep
Community Manager

Figure 13: This sample private note is used in the RightNow Community if a customer has cross-posted (redundantly posted their comment to multiple locations).

Best Practice: Make sure your moderators are proactively engaging with members (Figure 14).

Benefit: Seemingly minor acts can often make a big difference in increasing the engagement of your community members and employees. See the Checklist for more details on some specific moderation suggestions.

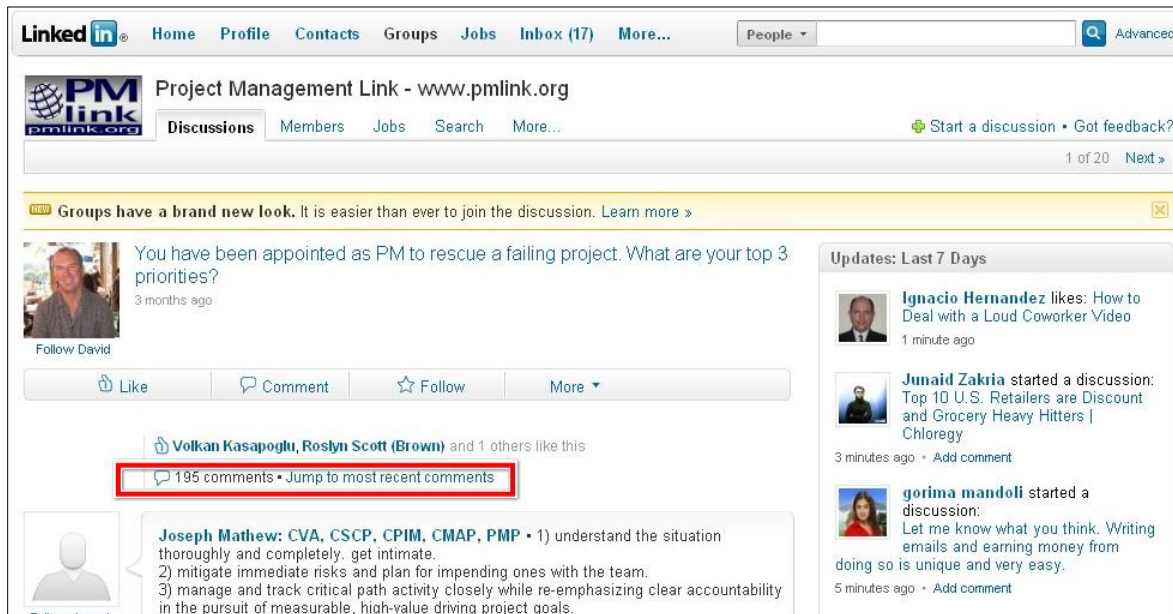


Figure 14: A moderator created this post asking for comments and received 195 responses—many from users who wouldn't have taken the time to create posts on their own!

Best Practice: Go the extra mile to keep top members involved in your community (Figure 15).

Benefit: Community participation often follows an 80/20 rule—meaning about 20 percent of members will contribute about 80 percent of the valuable content. Going out of your way to ensure that top members are involved and feel valued will go a long way towards promoting a vibrant community.

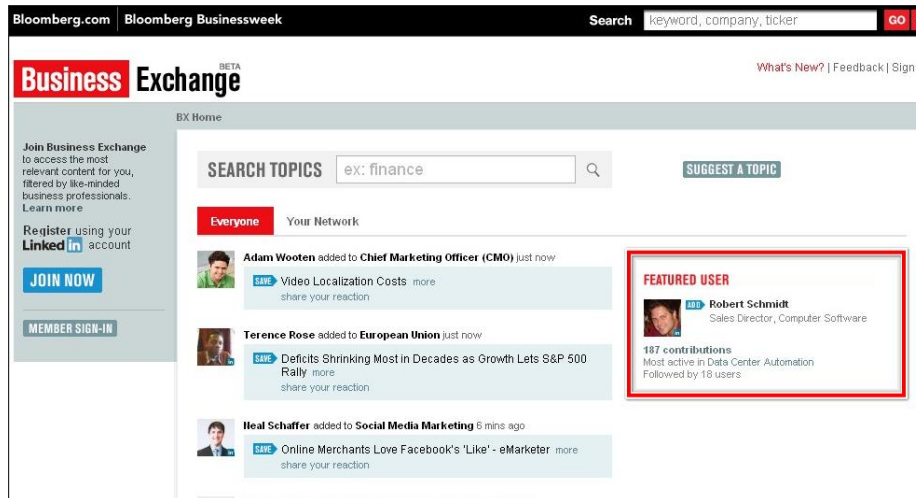


Figure 15: The Business Exchange uses its homepage to highlight and thank featured users.

5) Continuously track the performance of your community

While it is difficult to objectively compare the performance of your community to other communities, we recommend you track your performance over time to make sure you are always improving.

Best Practice: Benchmark your community against itself (Figure 16).

Benefit: By watching measurements such as the number of registered members, page views, post views, and post comments, you can take action if the numbers unexpectedly change.

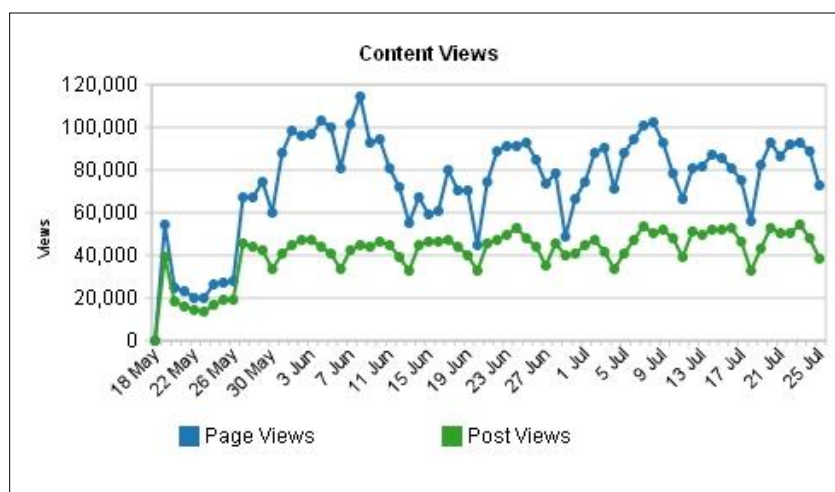


Figure 16: This chart shows (1) a spike in activity on June 8, which was the day of a product release, and (2) a general upward trend in overall views.

CONCLUSIONS/SUMMARY

Now that you are familiar with the RightNow Community Engagement Best Practices, we recommend you use the Community Engagement Tune-Up Checklist to perform an assessment of your deployment against these best practices in order to see where you have the greatest opportunities for improvement.

Please note that these practices are intended to be used as rules of thumb. If you have customer research or firsthand usability testing which suggests a different approach, your data should supersede the recommendations you find here.

Thank you for taking the time to review the RightNow Community Engagement Best Practices!

REFERENCE NOTES

Unless otherwise noted, all screenshots were taken from publicly available websites served by each respective organization in July 2010.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mike Alber, Community Management Consultant, loves helping companies succeed with their community building efforts. He has hands-on experience managing successful online community and social media initiatives and is a Certified Agile ScrumMaster.

Erica Leep, Community Manager for the RightNow Customer and Developer Community has over 4 years of experience with administrating, managing, promoting, and moderating RightNow's support and innovation communities. Additionally, she has contributed to similar customer marketing initiatives such as customer references, case studies, user groups, newsletters, and user conferences.

Ben Werner, Product Manager for Best Practices has conducted extensive user research regarding self-service, usability, and customer centric design methods. He also holds a Master's degree in Human-Computer Interaction from the University of Minnesota and is a board certified Associate User Experience Professional.

ABOUT RIGHTNOW TECHNOLOGIES

RightNow (NASDAQ: RNOW) is helping rid the world of bad experiences one consumer interaction at a time, seven million times a day. RightNow CX, the customer experience suite, helps organizations deliver exceptional customer experiences across the web, social networks, and contact centers, all delivered via the cloud. With more than eight billion customer interactions delivered, RightNow is the customer experience fabric for nearly 2000 organizations around the globe. For more information, please visit www.rightnow.com.

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