THECR NETWORK

# Maximizing the Impact of Small Teams

SNAPSHOT

**SPEAKERS**
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**COMPETENCIES**
Community Management

**MATURITY PHASES**
CMM1, CMM2, CMM3, CMM4

## TOP FOUR TAKEAWAYS

On this call members discussed strategies to leverage the efforts of small community teams. The top takeaways are noted below:

1. As a general rule, one member ensures that he spends the most time on those tasks that benefit the most members and the future of the community, rather than the one-off troubleshooting type tasks or requests that only benefit a few.

2. Ensuring the timely response to questions in the community was a task many members cited as a priority. One member shared that she tracks metrics on a monthly basis for this requisite to ensure that questions are answered promptly.

3. Continually encouraging people to share their blogs and written articles with the community is a smart way to re-purpose content. Not all content needs to be newly developed content.

4. Content curation is an onerous and time-consuming task. To assist with this, a few members use topic tags for content that they feel has value to the community. By attaching a topic tag, it can then be featured on the company's intranet homepage to help staff see which conversations and news items are trending.
   - Teach others how to use these hashtag procedures to help scale your efforts.
   - Use Twitter lists to follow industry leaders on a Twitter dashboard. Having this dashboard to view at a glance is quite helpful for not only content, but to also track potential collaborative efforts in the future.

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## OVERVIEW

1. **Prioritization:** With so many lone wolfs leading community management in their organizations, Georgina asked participants how they prioritize their day given such limited resources and time. In particular, which tasks participants will always focus on despite time constraints. Participants replied with the following:

    - One participant constantly ensures that forum questions are answered. All other activities will take a back seat to this task. Ensuring that the community stays current is this participant's biggest priority.

    - Another participant echoed this priority as it aligns with one of his organization's top goals, which is to help people connect to information and each other, welcome new members and perform all the key aspects of the first phase of a community. Welcoming new members, writing about the successes of the community and its wins is a priority because this can be shared in other publications, which helps to spread awareness and drive activity.

    - Another participant explained that his role has changed in recent months. As his organization stands-up more external communities in particular – and even a couple of internal ones – his top priorities are now regular communication and one-on-ones with those who work in community management. This participant has just one other person who helps him with his internal enterprise social network and she has been full-time on that function since March 2015. Prior to that it was just this participant.

        - This participant now spends his time on bi-weekly one-on-ones with community staff. As well, he makes a point to clearly communicate to his leadership the need to deflect random requests for community that do not fit within the community vision.

        - Prior to this new role, this participant was primarily focused on ensuring that community questions were answered, as well as engaging regularly in the community to help direct people to one another and to right areas and groups.

    - For another member, he sees technology and reporting as his top responsibilities because there is simply no one else who can manage these community needs. He tends to technology issues as they arise. He also handles all the data analysis and reporting. Fortunately, this participant has 50% of another person's time. This person takes care of much of the day-to-day activities already mentioned and he will help when needed.

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## OVERVIEW, CONT.

**2. Scaling Responsibilities as the Community Management Team Grows:** As community teams grow, Georgina asked participants which activities they attempt to scale and which activities they keep central to their main role as a community manager:

- One member stated that he focuses on teaching people those tasks that are considered day-to-day (such as moderation) and then helping them attach their role to how that fits into the community. This is an ongoing experiment to see how it works as they scale.
    - This participant explained that he will not turn over the storytelling and reporting function of his role.
    - One of the things that this participant hopes to teach others is to understand their role in the community as it relates to answering questions and owning their subject matter when it pops up in the community. He also wants to teach them how to "work out loud" and how all of these tasks support the community.
    - This same participant also has 50% of someone's time and has handed over some of the daily tasks like adding hashtags, welcoming new members, etc. so that he can focus on the high-level, strategic items. It is reassuring to hear that others do this, as well.

- Before Georgina joined TheCR, Hillary was a lone wolf. There were certain things that she considered priorities, but they tended to slip through the cracks given TheCR's desire to be high-touch with its members. Touchpoints with members and the on-boarding processes are very important to TheCR, but a live event or other big project would cause some tasks to fall through the cracks. With Georgina on board, it has opened up the bandwidth to work more strategically and look at more of the reporting and analysis. This is very different work than the day-to-day community activities and Hillary finds herself adjusting to strategic planning type of work.

- Adding just one more person to the team was such a gift for one member. He is now able to focus on the strategy side of the community and take on projects that he never had time for prior to this extra help. For instance, developing a roadmap or playbook. One additional body has helped this participant multiply his efforts by more than 100%.

- Another participant stated that she struggles with the daily upkeep of the community, such as the need to respond to people, answer calls and work on strategy sessions. She would like to have the time to create a video that she could direct people to so that she does not have to answer the same questions over and over. The pure creation vs. the on-point responding of requests does not meld well. It has been difficult to find a balance.

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## OVERVIEW, CONT.

- In response to this dilemma, one participant stated that when she was a lone wolf, she created screen shots instead of a full-out video. The video would be preferable, but not realistic given the time and resource constraints. Therefore, she produced a simple screen shot with arrows. This truly helped to move the needle because it can be used to streamline questions. It is a middle ground to consider if a video cannot be created.

**3. Partner with Others in the Organization for Support:** Georgina asked participants which departments they have partnered with for support in executing their community management strategy:

- For one member, he tries to align the task to a department's skill set or goals. For example, if the task is IT-related (like on-boarding or password support), he will reach out to IT. If the task is training-related, he will reach out to the Learning and Development area.

- This participant was asked how he finds the balance between delegating a task and the amount of time it takes to train/explain the task and just doing it himself. This participant explained that he is constantly tweaking this approach to find a model that works.

    - Another participant added that she uses Adobe Connect and its integrated audio feature in order to record the training that she does as a webinar. She uses that as the justification for spending time training an individual person. Once the webinar is recorded, she can point others to it. It is a matter of putting in the time upfront for a later benefit that can be leveraged repeatedly. Admittedly, some of these webinars are more successful than others, but at least she is compiling a list of resources. Eventually, she is hoping to set up a resource center.

    - Another participant has done this with success. He used to teach the live webinars and link them to their ESN homepage as learning opportunities. These are categorized by topic with the most recent recording listed first. In order to help his team to be more scalable, he also provides a range of quick cheat sheets to full user guides, tips and broadcasts, etc. That truly helps with the frequently asked questions. It is a process that definitely requires patience to set-up.

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# BEST PRACTICES

The following is a summary of the various best practices that emerged from the discussion with members:

**1. Spend Time on Those Tasks that Benefit the Most Members:** As a general rule, one member ensures that he spends the most time on those tasks that benefit the most members and the future of the community rather than the one-off troubleshooting type tasks or requests that only benefit a few.

**2. Track Metrics on a Monthly Basis:** One member shared that she tracks metrics on a monthly basis, especially those that prioritize the answering of questions in the community in a timely manner.

**3. Leverage Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) within the Community:** Georgina asked participants to share their tips and tricks for getting subject matter experts into the community and assisting other members:

- Set aside a timeslot for SMEs within the community and heavily promote that he/she will be available to answer questions during that time on his/her particular area of expertise.
- Focus on the “What’s in it for me?” factor. This helps to create a cycle that recognizes people and their efforts.

- One participant has used the Jive @mention feature quite heavily, which helped to entice SMEs into the community. This participant would mention two to four SMEs with links to relevant content that they had already created in order to connect the people/content and ideas. Inevitably, one of them would add to what he/she posted and build off of it. Even if the others did not respond, people in the community knew who the experts were in that area and connections would be made outside of the community, including social events. This technique worked very well for this participant at a minimal cost.

- Hillary shared that she makes a conscious effort not to reinvent the wheel. If she sees someone who has had an external blog post or has given a presentation at a conference that she has identified as something that could be of value in the community, it is an easy way to connect with the SME because there is not a lot of extra work involved.

- Oftentimes people think they have to write something from scratch, but that is not always the case. Hillary follows these people in a much more in-depth way than members do for that very reason – to help members connect with relevant content. Continually encouraging people to share back into the community – even if it is something they have already worked on – is a smart way to re-purpose content. Even if it has to be tweaked a little bit, it is much easier than writing a new piece of content, thereby reducing any extra work.

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## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

**4. Follow these Content Curation Tips within the Community to Save Time:** As a lone wolf, one participant shared her difficulty with content curation. She asked others to share how they deal with this much needed, but time-consuming task:

- One participant uses topic tags within his community, which is on the Yammer platform. For content that he feels has value, he will attach a topic tag that will then be featured on the homepage of his company's intranet. This helps staff to see which conversations and news items are trending.

    - This same participant has taught others how to use hashtags, particularly champions and people in his organization's communications team. Teaching others helps to scale your efforts when it comes to curation of content.

    - This same participant also uses this strategy with questions and uses a questions hashtag. This technique has helped him to find stories that he might not have found otherwise if he was buried in other work. Consequently, this participant is a big fan of teaching people as a way to free up his time.

- Another participant also used a similar hashtag procedure. She used a widget on her company's homepage that looked for content with that tag. It would then display the top five pieces of content that had the most recent activity. Since this proved very effective, she trained content owners to do the same. It is an organic and relatively simple way to curate content. topics.

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## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

**5. Follow these Content Curation Tips within the Industry to Save Time:** To further elaborate on the above best practice, participants shared how they curate content from within their industry:

- Hillary finds Twitter lists helpful. She takes the time upfront to organize industry leaders by list and follow them on a Twitter dashboard. Once the list is there and she finds a new individual of interest, it is much easier to drop them in as a potential expert or someone to watch. Having this dashboard to view at a glance is quite helpful for not only content, but also for potential collaborative efforts in the future.

- One participant shared that his company has certain feeds that are built into external newsfeeds. Newsfeed readers are part of their intranet content.

    - This participant explained that in his organization, he is part of the communications team. This has proved very helpful. Sitting within the communications team helps him to be at the hub of where the stories are written. This is particularly helpful since one of the business uses of his community is to decide on what should be written for the company's many publications.

    - The community also works in the reverse, as well. With such a large organization, the team often sits in on issue planning meetings. The community continues to be a spot where information can be found, which helps other parts of the organization.
    - This participant also has a "Working Out Loud" group and a "Future at Work" group where he adds various articles that he feels are important to driving conversations about those different topics.

- Another participant also makes use of Twitter feeds. As well, other topic groups have their own blogs or RSS feeds that they will automatically subscribe to in order to pull into those groups. It took about a year and a half to implement a programmatic process whereby the intranet homepage was completely redesigned. It includes about three to four new articles a day. The process for the communications teams to get something approved and scheduled for publication here now includes programmatically creating a new discussion thread in their ESN about an article the moment it goes live. The intranet homepage includes a like icon and a comment icon, which helps the content jump over to the ESN. This acts as a constant source of new information daily.

- On a cautionary note, one participant shared that it is very important to strive for a balance when it comes to content. Be careful not to overwhelm people with too much information. Share information and conversations that will have an impact, but do not take away from helping people to work better. That is one of the goals of this member's community.

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## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

**6. Plan Ahead in Order to Readily Adapt to Organizational Change:** Georgina asked members how they adapt to organizational changes, such as the departure of a community champion  or key Subject Matter Expert (SME):

- One member ensures that there is content that outlines what previous subject matter experts have done and how they made their content easily visible and searchable. That has influenced how this participant has talked about the community and how he highlights people within it. In other words, creating a path so that the next person can follow suit by viewing previous behavior or content.

- Another member shared that when she left her last company, she used her two week notice period to document exactly what she did on a daily basis. When she checked in with the company after she left, it turned out to be a valuable process because the champions and those whom she partnered with were able to step-up and fulfill certain tasks because she had outlined exactly what needed to be done.

- Georgina added that she and Hillary consistently work together on a playbook. It helps them on a day-to-day basis to manage what they do and decide on what they need going forward. They have done this in a way that is so simplified that any new member joining the team could read it as a training manual. It could also be used in the event of a team member's departure.

    - Another participant added that not only is this valuable if someone leaves, but it also helps the executive suite to see the full responsibilities of the role, which are often quite more than what they think.

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## LESSONS LEARNED

The following is a summary of lessons learned as shared by participants within the discussion:

- As shared by one member, they have a group within their internal network that acts as a "Who's Who" within the company. Over time, it has become the go-to place if someone needs to find an SME within the company. Their champions take ownership of this feature, which has a lot of eyes on it.

- On a more formal SME approach, once a month they will host an "Ask Me Anything" with an outside expert, as well as various internal Town Hall meetings with an outside SME. These are sponsored by their Digital Center of Excellence because it is mobile/social web related.

- Additionally, for one of their external communities they will pay professionals in various subjects to provide about 10 hours a week of legal advice on a variety of questions, particularly as they relate to Medicare. These SMEs are kept on a contract to provide their expertise.

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## ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Georgina asked participants for the number of dedicated community managers on their team, as well as how that number compares to the number of satellite or support individuals who help to fulfill their community needs, i.e. the number of full time official staff members compared to the full amount of people needed to support their communities. Participants replied with the following:

- One participant is one of two community managers for their internal for employees.
- Another participant is a team of one with a core partner in IT, their bosses and an engaged corporate sponsor (CIO).
- Yet another participant is a consultant who works in partnership with a client as a community manager and is the sole community manager for the other client.
- For one member, he has 50% of the time of one other person for community management related tasks. He also has some IT support, but he is still the main technical resource for their community software.
- Another member is one of three people on a team that supports both internal and external communities, but is the only dedicated resource for internal.
- Another participant is a lone wolf for the most part, but fortunately has a boss that is very good about jumping in to help when needed.
- Lastly, another member is a team of one, but the plan is to add staff over the next several months/year. This participant is building a cross-functional team that includes business leaders and members of their teams.

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