




Fierce Loyalty: Unlocking the DNA of Wildly Successful Communities

TOP THREE TAKEAWAYS

1. There are three preliminary steps to creating a strong community: identifying a common a need for the community and an organizational structure that contains three vital elements: connection, support and predictability.
2. Three qualities define fierce loyalty: pride, trust and passion.
3. There are many factors that can accelerate fierce loyalty, this report explores three favorites:
 - to create something together
 - to love your community
 - to stand for something bold

OVERVIEW

Sarah Robinson, author of “Fierce Loyalty: Unlocking the DNA of Wildly Successful Communities.” is a business coach and business strategist. She drew upon her experiences to write this book and shared those experiences with TheCR Network.

 SNAPSHOT
<p>SPEAKERS Sarah Robinson, Escape Mediocrity & Hillary Boucher, TheCR</p>
<p>COMPETENCIES Strategy, Culture</p>
<p>MATURITY PHASES CMM1, CMM2</p>

OVERVIEW, CONT.

Common Interest: Sarah explained that all communities are framed with a common interest. For anyone looking to create a community, this should be the first step to put in place. For instance, in her book she cites an example of organic dog food. The product of organic dog food may provide unparalleled life benefits for dogs, so the common interest could be about the product. Or the common interest could be something much bigger, such as holistic pet care.

It is not important to get your common interest 100% right before moving forward with the community. The main idea is to move forward and tweak afterwards (too many companies get stuck trying to find the perfect common interest and never move forward. This is definitely a place where perfect is the enemy of launched).

Compelling Needs: Once that common interest has been discovered, the next step is to look for those people who show or indicate a need for the community. In order to recognize those candidates, look for three specific needs: a need to belong, a need for recognition and a need for safety. (See the Best Practices Section below for more details).

Organizational Structure: The organizational structure of the community must contain three critical elements:

- a. **Connection:** Community offers connections and engagements. Once people find a source for that connection and engagement, they rarely ever leave it. There is a connection between happiness, loyalty and engagement that offers that sense of happiness that humans so deeply crave.
- b. **Support:** Support is an integral part of this organizational structure, not only support from the community leader or the organization leading the community, but to get and give support to each other. Again, those connection points where community members are connected are incredibly important.
- c. **Predictability:** Community members want to know how the community operates, when the meetings are, an explanation of the rules, who is in charge, how things work, etc. Humans crave that predictability.

When Community Happens: When the three needs and the organizational structure overlap, that is the basis of a strong community. This overlap consists of people who want to be there in the community. It is difficult to reach this point, but when this stage is reached the strength of the community leads to longevity. Fierce loyalty is the next stage of that evolution.

OVERVIEW, CONT.

Fierce Loyalty through Advanced Evolution: Sarah explained that there are three qualities that define fierce loyalty. They are pride, trust and passion. Not surprisingly, these three qualities take the longest to develop (which causes some unease in the business world that is intent on quick ROI).

Fierce Loyalty Accelerators: In her book Sarah lists 11 fierce loyalty accelerators, but for the purpose of this presentation Sarah focused on her three favorites:

a. *Create Something Together:* When individuals go through the process of creating something together as a community, the end result is something that the community feels proud of along with a sense of ownership in its success.

b. *Love your Community:* This does not refer to loving a community because of what it can do for the organization. Instead, show how the community is loved by finding out about them, spending time with them and talking about the things that are important to them. That will fuel that feeling of passion because if the leadership of the community demonstrates that kind of interest, it gives permission and sets the tone for other community members to show that interest in each other. That is a huge accelerator.

c. *Stand for Something Bold:* Today's marketplace is crowded. People are bombarded with messages and information. Individuals are finding it increasingly difficult to know what they should pay attention to and the end result is to tune out most of it. The communities that are able to stand for something bold and unique, those are the communities that will garner attention and participation. As a result, they will foster the qualities of pride, trust and passion.

BEST PRACTICES

Recognize those Candidates who Indicate the Desire to Fill Three Particular Needs

Sarah explained that in order to gather members who will be the basis for a loyal community, it is important to ensure that these members have indicated the desire to fulfill three particular needs:

- a. *The Need to Belong*: These members have the need to be a part of something bigger than themselves.
- b. *The Need for Recognition*: These members want to be seen and heard. Sarah also wanted to point out at this time that recognition does not necessarily come in the form of prizes.
- c. *The Need for Safety*: This does not necessarily refer to physical safety, but rather a need to feel safe and comfortable within a group in order to share and converse.

Understand the Hallmarks of a Fiercely Loyal Community

Sarah explained that there are three hallmarks of a fiercely loyal community: pride, trust and passion.

Help the CFO Understand the Benefits of a Fiercely Loyal Community

Sarah explained that there are returns on investment in a community that cannot be earned any other way. The following elements of a fiercely loyal community have a completely positive impact on the bottom line of an organization:

- a. *Empowered Evangelists*: This is like having a free marketing department. This is invaluable in today's economy. Additionally, consumers do not trust what companies say about themselves, but they do trust what their peers tell them about a product.
- b. *Built-in Research and Marketing Team*: Organizations can use their fiercely loyal communities to test a product before launching it to the public.
- c. *Hungry Client Base*: Again, if the organization is investing in their community and the community comes to count on the organization to build products that are perfectly suited to their needs (which can be done because the organization knows their community incredibly well), these members become eager consumers. That is why Apple has become so successful.
- d. *Reduced Client Attrition*: When a customer is engaged in a community, they are not likely to leave it. Harley Davidson is a great example of a fiercely loyal community.
- e. *A Happier Client*: Experience shows that organizations do their best work with happy clients. Happy clients complain less and they tend to spend more money. The organization, in turn, offers better products to happy clients.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. It is impossible to decouple the culture of an organization from the community. In other words, the culture needs to align with the community in order for it to be fiercely loyal and vice versa. Sarah wholeheartedly agreed. If the company has the culture of a dictatorship, it will not likely foster an internal community that is fiercely loyal. A fiercely loyal internal community is a culture in and of itself.
2. People sharing their stories (including executives) can really catch people's attention.
3. For those who work in industries for which it is difficult to foster excitement (such as the insurance or finance industries) the trick is to go back and figure out the common interest and understand why someone would want to be a part of the community in the first place. In the insurance industry, for instance, someone would be interested in what it is that the company could do to help them accomplish certain life planning goals. If it was life insurance, the community could talk about how to help people live the type of life they want to live.
4. To find ways to turn members into better advocates think about what it is that they need, i.e. the compelling need that makes them want to be a part of the community. This member replied that it is different for everyone. They have various products and different groups within the organization at different levels. They have to try and appeal to every single group and almost every person to find out what they need and make the tool fit the way that they work.
5. Jim suggested that since this particular industry talks about wellness, that could be a first step. To Sarah's point about creating something together, perhaps a concept could be developed around wellness. One idea would be to create competition within the company by setting a goal for the company to lose X number of pounds as an organization. It would help to create these offshoots of people who start groups changing eating habits or getting active. Some of those early advocates could be the ones to help launch those groups (which, in turn, could enhance workplace culture or reduce employee turnover, etc.). It may not impact their day-to-day work, but it could help with some of the higher order challenges or goals of the community. Both this participants and Sarah loved this idea.