THECR NETWORK

Cultivating Super Users to Nurture Success

SPEAKERS
Ryan Arsenault (Mimecast) & Kelly Schott (TheCR)

COMPETENCIES
Leadership

MATURITY PHASES
CMM1, CMM2

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Interested in Ryan's top lessons learned?** These translate into 4 easy-to-implement best practices.
2. **Want to know Ryan's top take away?** Read on to the lessons learned. The answer makes sense, but can be hard to enforce when other departments are involved. Be strong for your advocates.
3. **Curious what Ryan would do differently if he could?** Ryan gave his retrospect answer to this, which may surprise you.

OVERVIEW

➢ **Background Ryan Arsenault.** Ryan is the Community Manager for Mimecast, which is a customer support community of over 30,000 users. Their super users are called "Mimecast Legends."
   - Mimecast is a cyber-security company with 1300 employees based in London. Their US headquarters is in Lexington, MA.
➢ **Background Mimecast.** Everything is divided into actions. Knowledge-based actions include all the product documentation, blogs, etc. Then there is user enablement, which is where people come to ask questions, complain, etc. The community forums exist there.
   - *Mission.* The goal is to better educate their customers in order to make them more self-sufficient and, in turn, drive down support call volume.
   - *Challenge.* The community did not leverage the power of super users in the beginning.
   - *Goal.* Decrease support call volume and expand the

CASE STUDY – MIMECAST

> **Mimecast Community.** The community consists of forums where people can share ideas and product documentation.
> - Mimecast had a soft launch in 2015 with just under 200 users, a beta audience if you will. Ryan had not yet joined Mimecast at that point, so he basically inherited this community.
> - Mimecast was launched with help from 7Summits.
> - The community didn't have a major differentiator from the Mimecast.com site, especially since the community was in Marketing at the time. One of Ryan's main goals after getting to know the community was to understand who the super users were, the purpose of the community and following through with that purpose. His recommendation was to move the community to Service Delivery in order to be a true support community. That is where they are housed today. They are much better aligned now with customer-facing functions.

> **Mimecaster Central Legends Program.** Ryan recognized right away that he had inherited a dead community. They hadn't cultivated any super users to leverage their power or credibility in talking to other customers. Product marketing is not necessarily a neutral party. It's important to have a base of people who actually know the product to work alongside the customer base. The community didn't yet have a voice. Enter Mimecast Legends.
> - This program was started informally in 2016 when Ryan joined Mimecast. It's a program that rewards the most active community champions who continue to offer legendary assistance to their peers in the support community. They now have 15 Legends in the community vs. zero just a few years ago.
> - They have an initiative at Mimecast called "Legendary Customer Success."
> - Legends have an exclusive badge designation on their profile.
> - They have access to a private Legends-Only Forum.
> - Legends are offered participation in exclusive feedback calls with Mimecast Product Management. Product Management will implement some of the feedback into the products and then go back to the Legends to ask their opinion. They work towards a closed feedback loop. There are plans to use the feedback from the Legends when they launch their new community.
> - Member Q&As/Profiles are called "Legends of Mimecast." Legends will be asked questions designed to help their peers with support initiatives and product problems. They also have some fun with the Legends with questions like what is their favorite food, movie, etc.

CASE STUDY – MIMECAST, CONT.

- Legends enjoy random acts of delight and other goodies, including Legends-branded apparel sporting the Legends Shield.
  - One Legend member asked about the unused Mimecast licenses in his organization as a perk for his services. Ryan talked to his sales rep and explained the value of this member to the community. They wanted to keep him happy because of the value he provided. As a result, they were able to waive the licenses for this customer.

- **Legendary Impact.** This program has had a nice impact. Participating users have jumped over 3X in just 2 years. The active customer base has grown over 4X in 3 years.
  - By March 2018 they had 5 "Jedi Masters," which are Legends who have earned over 20,000 points. Legends have unofficially taken over a lot of the moderator's duties.
  - Legends are known to go above and beyond. One Legend with a support background saw that another customer was having an issue. He organized a WebEx outside of the community and helped that other customer solve a support problem. Another Legend helps others with customer codes to help Mimecasters with the product. It builds off of itself and has become an ongoing repository.

- **Eventual tiered program.** They are moving to Salesforce Community Cloud at the end of 2019. Ryan wants to have 2 tiers. One tier would be for those who want to become certified in Mimecast products. Another tier would be for gold members, i.e. people who know the products but are perhaps a little more informal. They aren't going the certification route, but they are Mimecast advocates and champions.

- **Don't ignore the secondary goals of the community.** As a support community, Ryan wants the Legends in the community to interact and help each other and newbies to the community. They also provide a great deal of feedback to help improve the product. Legends have also provided the community with free content and case studies. Eventually, this is something that Ryan would like to work in collaboration with marketing on as they scale the Legends Program. Be aware of some of these secondary benefits to your advocacy program.

BEST PRACTICES

➢ **Encourage quality participation.** Ryan explained that people can easily rack up points by logging-in and liking a lot of posts. Eventually, they had to put a cap on that type of interaction in order to foster quality participation. If there is someone in the community answering lots of questions and getting marked correct in their answers, Ryan will ask if they should make this person a Legend in the community. They want to reward people who add value to the community.

➢ **Build relationships and trust with your super users.** Yes, you want the contests and those sorts of perks, but as you scale it's really important to focus on the core. It can be as simple as a strong one-on-one relationship. Ryan likes to find things that he has in common with his super users, such as baseball. By building that one relationship and as others in the community do the same, it builds off of itself and is self-sustaining.

➢ **Make your customers self-sufficient.** The selfish goal is to drive down support volume – and they have to almost 10% over a year – but metrics is just part of the story. You want to make sure that customers get to the information that they need as quickly as they can. If you see the participation number level off, it doesn't mean that they are not learning or engaging. It's that they are able to get to the content faster. So, you want to drive down support volume, but you want to make sure that customers are getting to what they need as quickly as possible. Ryan's role is directing them there, but also making sure the moderators do some sensitive things that get posted right away, making sure the documentation is up to date, funneling them to the right content right away and getting them the information they need the most. A big part of that involves the Legends in the community.

➢ **Protect your super users.** Don't over-use your super users and make sure that there is always something in it for them. They are taking time out of their day to help others. There has been a trust established between you and your super users as a result. Never violate that trust. Make sure that when marketing wants to do something in the community, the goals are aligned with your community. Be a shield to your super users to ensure that initiatives and any changes benefit them.
  - You will find that your super users keep you accountable. Brand is important. The Legends have kept many different departments in check with their feedback. That is a very under-rated value that doesn't always get the attention it deserves.

LESSONS LEARNED

➢ The Legends have sparked a great deal of discussion. Ryan believes that for every 'like' on an answer, it is a service call deflected. They don't have a way to measure that right now because they aren't integrated with any business systems. The more important thing to look at is the value of the program vs. just the metrics. Perhaps a thread of 96 comments saved potentially a couple of hundred service calls.

➢ For those just getting started with their advocacy program, try getting discussions going in the community to see who steps up. Try different forms of content like pulls or questions that would help with the product, i.e. "Ask Me Anything" type of events. It will involve a great deal of trial and error, but the first place to start is with discussions.

➢ Ryan was asked if they followed a ratio for Legends vs. regular community members. Ryan replied that it has to be whatever works for each individual community. They have 15 Legends to about 7500 members. It works for them.

➢ Fortunately, Ryan hasn't had a lot of conflict with his Legends. Part of that could be because they are customers and they have been vetted so carefully.

➢ If Ryan could leave participants with just one take away, it would be to ensure that the trust with your super users is never violated. Be transparent and never make false promises. Also, be respectful of every "ask" you have of them.

➢ A lesson learned for Ryan was not to focus on recruiting a certain number of super users as a metric of your program. In the beginning, Ryan recruited much less carefully to fulfill the number he had set. Now he vets much more carefully and doesn't focus on a number. It's more important to have the right people in place; quality over quantity.

➢ In retrospect, Ryan said that he wouldn't have tried to launch the community with all the bells and whistles. They've been moving their way backwards as a result. They launched with many different things, but have spent their time playing catch-up. They started with an undeveloped idea for their advocacy program. Keep in mind that your advocacy program doesn't have to be elaborate. It's more about the process and the people that you have in there, a loose framework of expectations for them, what you want to see out of each advocate and let it build off of there. Be transparent with your expectations. The bigger you get, the more help you'll get.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

➢ **Kelly asked participants where they were in their advocacy program journey.**
  - **Six members are on the start of their journey and were on the call to learn.**
  - **Three members want to ramp up their somewhat informal programs and were on the call in search of ideas.**
  - **Two participants do not yet have an advocacy program and are on the call to learn.**