



How MetLife Met a Member Milestone... And Saw Engagement Shift Along the Way

 **SNAPSHOT**

SPEAKERS

Noelle Farra and Sue Tuttle (MetLife) & Kelly Schott (TheCR)

COMPETENCIES

Culture

MATURITY PHASES

CMM1, CMM2

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Interested in what Noelle and Sue discovered as best practices?** Four in-depth best practices were shared in this discussion.
2. **Want to know how Noelle and Sue’s experiments turned into successful activities that got people sharing?** Five different experiments were shared. Even experiments that didn’t work turned into something worthwhile because lessons were learned.
3. **Curious to know how Noelle and Sue made career development relatable?** This one little trick helped them to promote the corporate agenda while also helping people with their career development.

OVERVIEW

- **Background Noelle Farra and Sue Tuttle.** Both women sit in the Global Learning and Development Department, which is part of HR. Both have many years of experience working in different departments within Met Life. They believe that this diverse experience helps to create and add value when helping others.
 - Their community is a small, employee-based community that has been in existence for 2 years.
 - They are not full-time community managers. They co-share managing the community. Even when both their hours are added together, it is still not full-time. That means that they need to be creative and learn to network. This helps them to build relationships with people in the community to get them to do some of the work.

OVERVIEW, CONT.

- **Background Met Life.** For over 150 years, Met Life has been one of the world's leading financial services companies
 - One of the company tenets is to help people navigate the future. They work to help employees think about how to be prepared.
 - The world today is in a hyper-digital environment. Technology has a tremendous change on personal and professional lives, as well as organizations. Met Life is going through a significant transformation that started about 6 years ago. They have a new CEO, new internal announcements and people shifting into different positions within the organization.
 - It's difficult to operate in an environment that is constantly changing. The hope is that community will provide clarity for employees. Noelle and Sue like to be able to provide context so that employees can have a handle on what's happening next and be prepared.
 - Met Life introduced Yammer 2 years ago primarily as a communication tool. There is no community management structure at all. Instead, they have over 600 Yammer groups. Anyone can create a group. Some are active and some are more defined.
 - Noelle and Sue look at community as a way to help educate employees on how to prepare for the future, how to know what to get from the future and then bring learning into the conversation without making it feel like a traditional learning exercise.

- **Community.** The community has over 1100 members, which is a drop in the bucket considering that there are over 50,000 employees across Met Life.
 - They are a large global organization across 40 plus countries.
 - They have 10 standard languages at Met Life. English alone reaches over 90% of the organization.
 - They have begun to attract a global audience of people outside of the US from all of their participating regions. Some people practice their English skills by participating and posting in the community. The opposite is also true. Some members practice other languages in the community as a way to learn, as well. This is a nice added benefit.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Give them something they didn't know they needed.** Noelle and Sue knew that as people went through this transformation at MetLife, people would need to get out of their silos/departments/business groups/regions in order for MetLife to achieve its transformation. Groups needed to be able to work with each other across the organization. The current environment was full of repetition. This meant that they had to work on getting people together and building enough trust that they could collaborate.
 - They created a template called: "Getting to know you in 60 seconds." It didn't catch on as well as they thought it would. Only a handful of people participated and of those, some didn't want their information shared, which defeated the purpose.
 - They then tried different posts to help people get to know each other. It asked for people to talk about things that they liked and what brought them to the community. This didn't work either. What this taught them was that, for MetLife employees, the direct approach didn't work.
 - They decided to come in through the back door by holding a party on Fridays, each Friday with a different theme. For example, a Cinco de Mayo party. Everyone was asked to name an appetizer that they would bring and include the recipe if they wanted. They are asked ice-breaker questions like "What would you do to help get to know someone?" or "Tell us about something you are doing differently this year that you didn't do last year." People were willing to share tips like this because they felt that they were helping others. They didn't see it as revealing clues about themselves. However, what ended up happening was that people got to know each other better.
 - WebEx has a feature where you can divide people into smaller groups. Noelle and Sue started to hold a "coffee hour" for people to join. Again, these were themed. People were divided into smaller groups and given a couple of questions to get started. They would discuss the questions for about 20 minutes and then the smaller group would be brought back to join the broader group. People liked the intimacy of smaller conversation. Ironically, they loved the fact that they could interact and network with people that they didn't know and then foster the connection afterwards. This approach is labor and time intensive, but Sue would highly recommend it as it got people talking.
- **Flex and grow with your customer.** Their initial goal was to share learning resources to create awareness for the vast resources that MetLife has paid for that many didn't even know existed.
 - In the beginning, what they learned looking back on their earliest posts was that they were very focused on their own world, not the customer's world. They learned that if they could help put context around what was happening in their customer's world, it was much more relatable.

BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- They also learned through internal and external data that customer expectations change. If they know externally that customer's expectations change from how or what type of products they want to buy, then their expectations may change within the community, as well. What customers needed yesterday from the community might not be what they need today.
 - Data was the big eye opener for MetLife. MetLife garnered a lot of external data and hired data scientists into their brand and marketing organization to help them understand client needs, expectations and wants. It was a huge shift for the company because they changed from a sales-driven organization to a market-driven organization.
 - The data told them that people want things quickly, they want it made easy and they want it personalized. Employees wanted the same thing. So, MetLife did an internal study. Now they had internal data that confirmed that the external data was correct. Whether the individual was a customer looking for a product or service or whether they were an employee or a member in a community or if they had learning needs, they want their data easy to find, they want it now and they want it personalized in terms of how the data will directly help them.
 - When MetLife started looking at it through this lens, it helped them to learn how to bring value to their customers and to grow with them. They created a group called: "Let's Chat about your Development." They have a new platform for learning resources that puts learning at the individual's fingertips.
 - Even that wasn't enough. Sue and Noelle had to tell the story. On a personal level, if someone needs to learn something, they ask friends, they Google it, etc. Learning in the organization follows the same structure. So, they framed the story in the context of all the resources available at the employee's fingertips that help them in their jobs. People could type their questions in the platform vs. Google or they could post a question in the community. All of a sudden, it quickly became the go-to place for learning.
 - A lot of the early adopters have become the champions for the organization.
- **Experiment, learn and have fun.** The Slinky was never intended to be a fun toy. It was created to be a stabilizer for equipment on a ship. As an accident, the inventor knocked the Slinky over and it did the "Slinky" walk, which turned into NYT Magazine's list of "one of the greatest toys of all time." It was an accident. The moral of the story is to experiment.

BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- Noelle said that this is one of the cornerstones of learning success in their community. They learned from TheCR Conferences that people like to have fun. Therefore, they freed themselves from the corporate setting in order to foster learning. Breaking away from the corporate setting as an experiment showed them that it's not wrong to have fun. Learning can come from fun. When people learn from each other, collaborate and have fun together, they build trust. Thus, they developed "Let's Chat." None of their experiments, whether they worked or not, are considered a failure because they were able to learn from it. All the "getting to know you" experiments discussed earlier might not have worked, but they weren't failures because that in and of itself helped them to learn what people didn't like. Some people didn't want to connect publically, but they did so privately. The end result was collaboration and learning from each other.
- Another experiment was "Yam Jams" on Yammer. With this people share their go-to resources, their favorite author, book, etc. It has been incredibly successful. Even non-members participate.
- Virtual networking sessions are always a huge hit. People don't have to physically leave their desks to meet people outside of their own space.
- A learning calendar was created quite by accident. They always do a newsletter, but at the beginning of the year, Sue stumbled upon a January calendar that was filled with different tips for becoming a "new you" with different resolutions. They launched this through the theme of "career and development planning." They broke it into buckets with tips to help members with this theme all while layering in the corporate resources available on the learning platform. They had very positive feedback for this calendar. People see it as a useful tool.
- They just launched a "tip" jar filled with weekly career advice. The rule is that if someone takes from the tip jar, they need to add a tip back. Again, it fosters sharing and collaborating.
- A lesson learned was that if there is a lot required for a person to participate, it's a big turn off. This was validated through the data that they received from the surveys. People perceive that they don't have time for learning. Anything extra should be very, very easy and require minimal time.
- "Three Things I Learned." This experiment was created in the spirit of development planning. If people are spending time investing in their own development, what are 3 things they have learned in this quarter and how will they apply them? This didn't go over too well, again because people were afraid to share it publically. But from this setback they learned that by re-purposing the template, it could be used as a marketing vehicle not just within "Let's Chat", but within the whole organization. Now other departments use it as well.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- As a starter question to the conversation, Sue asked call participants what they do to build trust in their communities.
 - Gamification.
 - A board where people can post what they have learned from the community.
 - Badges.
 - Points.
 - Favorite pet picture.
 - Welcome posts.
 - Employee-driven blogs.
 - A direct and simple 'ask'.

- Noelle asked call participants how their community helps their members make sense of what's happening around them whether it's in their jobs or their industry or the world around them.
 - Answering questions.
 - Uploading resources.
 - Relevance.
 - Massive Q&A when the company split.
 - Blogs on relatable topics.
 - Branding resources.
 - Cost savings for re-used answers and deflected calls.

- In the spirit of following their own advice, Noelle asked participants to share what they might do differently as a result of participating in this call.
 - The small groups, such as the "Coffee Café." One participant liked the idea of starting out with one group, breaking off into smaller groups and then reconvening.
 - Templates.
 - The calendar.
 - Tips jar and the idea of taking one and giving one.
 - Kelly liked how Sue and Noelle discovered how people learned through activities that had alternate intentions, such as picking up languages by connecting with others in the community.

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LESSONS LEARNED, CONT.

- Learning happens at work and at home and the two are becoming so intertwined because of today's digital landscape. People say they don't have time to learn, yet they are learning in all kinds of innovative ways. Engaging in a Yammer group can be just as meaningful as a 4-hour class.
- Career development is a requirement at MetLife. What Sue and Noelle do is take the corporate "feel" out of it and make it more personal. If they relate to people that way, it helps to promote the corporate agenda while helping people with their career development.
- Participants shared some activities that work for them.
 - A "New Member Quest" as part of onboarding. It requires new members to read and bookmark the company's Code of Conduct and following people, etc. In the form of a game, they train people to do what they want them to do. By participating, these new members can create awareness for themselves, earn points and move up the ranks.
 - They will also institute different campaigns, one for each season during those time periods when activity dips. It involves a series of badges. If all the badges are complete, they earn an additional badge, which is worth many points and can boost a member's reputation. As a support community, people come in and out infrequently. This is a way to help keep them in the community.
- The tip jar activity was launched in the newsletter. Every Wednesday, the members would receive a tip and they were given instructions for how it worked. Noelle and Sue will give a tip, along with a resource. The rule is to then add a tip in order to keep the "jar" full. People come, read the post and like it and then post their own tip.
 - One of the drawbacks of Yammer is pictures. They can't show a picture of a jar without people clicking in 3 different places. Yammer does have a picture sharing capability, but MetLife does not turn that on given their strict regulatory environment. So, they just posted the activity as an announcement.
- Kelly asked if Sue and Noelle measure and/or report on the success of their activities. Fortunately, given that this is not their full time job, there are no expectations of them. They do not have to report, although they do periodically because it is the right thing to do. They found that the metrics that MetLife uses are not very robust. They are looking at an overlay tool. Yammer isn't one of MetLife's top 10 priorities, so a lot of what they have is eyeballing and paying attention. It's more anecdotal.

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ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

- Kelly asked participants to share a goal or milestone that they are working towards currently or may have recently achieved.
 - Increasing engagement for international users, i.e. translate and feature content for the different global areas.
 - Looking at the future of various platforms and where things fit in because in this participant's opinion, nothing replaces the integrated experience of Jive.
 - Increasing external community engagement.
 - To move educational content to create an educational community within the support community.

RESOURCES

- Presentation deck:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ht7pxjjn4bb95I/AADqRiBC8BOK4QAfQHRcZi-ca/Let%27s%20Chat_for%20CR_05012019_FINAL%2005022019.pptx?dl=0