



# Learning to Ask for What You Need

 **SNAPSHOT**

**SPEAKERS**  
Kelly Schott (TheCR)

**COMPETENCIES**  
Strategy

**MATURITY PHASES**  
CMM1, CMM2, CMM3

## HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Want to know what frustrates members of TheCR the most?** The top frustration in the Network was noted, as well as 3 other member participant frustrations.
2. **Looking for answers to the “what” and “who” questions listed below?** Read on to the best practices section for some thought-provoking responses.
3. **Interested in participant’s top takeaways from the Amanda Palmer TED talk?** Participants shared 6 key lessons learned.

## OVERVIEW

- **Background.** Kelly divided the call into 2 main topics or questions. The first question discussed the “what” piece, as in “What is your biggest need?” “What is your biggest problem?” and/or “What would help your problem?” The second area focused on the “who” question, as in “Who has the stuff that we need?” and “Who do you ask for help currently?”
  - Kelly then tied the 2 questions together with the following: “What is keeping you from what you need?”
- **Many community professionals feel burnt out.** The State of Community Management (SOCM) Report revealed that there is an uncertainty or frustration level among community professionals on the whole. This year – and the year previous – almost half of the respondents for the survey said that they felt highly burnt out or frustrated overall. That is quite a large population. Kelly wanted to get a sense of the participant’s reaction to that finding.

## OVERVIEW, CONT.

- One participant agreed with the finding. She talks to a lot of community managers and part of what she is trying to do in her role is elevate the position of community manager or digital workplace manager. This way, companies that look to this participant's product understand that they truly need to resource the platform properly. Many companies don't realize the amount of work that goes into managing a digital workplace well. Furthermore, there are many skill sets necessary to run a community properly. So, this participant is not surprised at all.
  - Another participant wholeheartedly agreed as she felt that she spent half of the year in a totally burnt out state. The upside is that the company recognized how dreadful this year was and last spring this participant was able to gain positive inroads in the resource budget for her community. Still not enough, but at least enough for some flexibility.
- **Top frustration.** Kelly asked those on the call to list their top frustrations. If interested, there is also a poll in TheCR Network:
- Not enough resources is the top frustration noted by members in the Network.
  - Two members replied that it was their technology platform (tools) that cause them frustration.
  - Conflicting priorities. This ties back to resources. A declared and named executive sponsor is extremely important for a successful community.
  - Another member added that this is especially true for smaller teams. Community managers are expected to think strategically to expand their programs, but he/she also takes care of the day-to-day operations. When you're at capacity, it's very difficult to think strategically. Others agreed. The opposite is also true. If someone is thinks strategically only, the day-to-day suffers.

## BEST PRACTICES

- **Analyze the “What” questions.** Elaborating further on what Kelly introduced earlier in the call, participants discussed the various “what” questions:
  - ***What is it - at this moment - that you need the most?*** Participants offered the following:
    - A unified community roadmap.
    - A community manager with strong platform customization skills.
    - A roadmap that includes engagement programs that are supported by executives so that they are attractive and robust.
    - Analytics (and an easy way to get at the numbers).
  - ***What is your community’s biggest problem?***
    - Administrative tasks to run the community. This participant feels she is too stuck in the weeds to get at a proper community roadmap.
    - Tying external community into an internal (organizational) content strategy. This participant’s company is in the midst of building a content strategy for the entire organization and they don’t have a true leader for this strategy.
    - Too many good ideas and the need to focus on specific ideas to drive growth and engagement.
    - Prioritizing different tasks/projects, especially at the end of the year.
  - ***What would help your problem?***
    - Executive champions who could provide organizational shifts.
    - Human resources who are SMEs and can support community. Two participants voted for this solution.
    - Not having to wait so long to hire someone – especially when you have someone in mind!
    - SMEs and human resources.
      - If and when you are in the glorious position of being able to hire someone, hiring for your weakness(es) is a smart hiring strategy.
- **Analyze the “Who” question.** Stating the problem is the first step in finding a solution. In stating the problems above, a pattern can be seen that points towards people and developing relationships. So, analyzing the various “who” questions will help pinpoint who should be asked and who they are as an individual. Know a little bit about the person in order to understand how to ask him/her for help.

## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- The Amanda Palmer TED Talk (see link in the Resources Section below) demonstrated the need to think outside the box to find the answers to your problem and/or point you in the direction for where you can get help. It paved the way for the next set of “who” questions.
  - ***Who has the stuff that we need?***
    - Colleagues.
    - Broader network.
    - Colleagues, broader network, peer networks (like TheCR).
    - TheCR Network. As a lone wolf, this participant was able to call on TheCR as an added voice within her organization when decisions were being made.
  - ***Who do you ask for help currently?***
    - Subject/topic/project experts (in and outside organizations).
    - Integration vendor/partner & subject experts/interested peers.
    - High school students with related skill sets
    - Community members and champions (would love to see even more webinars on this topic within TheCR).
      - Platform vendor (day-to-day and strategy).
- **Tying it all together.** As a way to tie the two questions together, Kelly asked participants what it is that is keeping them from getting what they need.
  - Previous experience and/or previous interactions that may not have gone well.
  - Prioritizing the need for relationship building time.
  - Prioritizing relationship-building time, especially if logistics are not ideal (such as working remotely).
  - Vulnerability (you don’t have to have all the answers).
  - Empathy.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Kelly asked participants to give their takeaways on the Amanda Palmer TED talk:
  - Don't be afraid to be vulnerable. This is especially true for women.
  - Summarize what you need and why. Connect its value to organizational needs and goals.
  - Trust and vulnerability go hand-in-hand. Sometimes we have to be vulnerable and trusting in order to build relationships. Get to know people as people.
  - Learn to say no when something is not within your skill set. Ask for help. Recognize your strengths, but also realize that you can't do it all. It's not a weakness to ask for help. Focus on your talents and be willing to hand off those areas that fall outside of your strengths.
  - As a way to shift your thinking, *let* people help you. Ask people if they would like to be involved so that you can let them share their skills with you.
  - As part of relationship building, it's important to know what the other person wants or has a stake in, which is kind of like shared community value. What is someone going to get out of this? What are we going to get out of this? What do we get out of this together? It states the reason and/or benefit to working together to accomplish something that is of value to all parties involved.
  
- As a way to help her create badges for a gamification project, one participant took an Adobe class at the local high school. She met someone who was later able to help her with this task. It's a great demonstration of "thinking outside the box" to help you get what you need.
  
- One participant shared that what has really aided her when it comes to asking for help is to take a step back and devise a plan for the ask. When she can present her case with a well thought-out plan, it is much better received.
  
- As a final question, Kelly asked participants to think about how they can help each other figure out all the messy details to put these processes in place. Going forward, please let TheCR know if you are having a difficult time reaching anyone in The Network or need an introduction to make connections. We need to help each other learn even better how to talk to new people and learn how to build relationships and/or make new connections.

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

- Kelly asked participants to share the reporting structure for their communities and whether or not they meet regularly with the members of these departments:
  - Marketing; meet regularly.
  - Knowledge management through IT; meet regularly.
  - Currently marketing, but the company is developing an evangelism role and community will report to that role.
  - One participant technically reports to marketing as the Senior Community Manager. She is 100% dedicated to community. Meetings take place when budget resources are required. This participant has more meetings with those people that she doesn't report to, such as customer success and technical support. She meets them on a regular basis for team collaboration.

## RESOURCES

- As mentioned in the discussion: [The Art of Asking | Amanda Palmer | TED2013](#)
- As mentioned in the discussion: [How To Build A Better Neighborhood | NY Times](#)