



What does online community add to a site?

Online community satisfies some very basic human needs. It does so on the global as well as the local scale by connecting people across geographical boundaries, cultural differences or demographics according to shared interests, needs, attitudes or roles.

Individuals have needs to...

- 1) Gain information and support;
- 2) Share thoughts, experiences, ideas and opinions;
- 3) Belong and identify themselves with others.

Online community provides venues where people can connect with other individuals or with organizations in order to pursue and fulfill those needs. Such connections often take place because of shared knowledge and comparable interests or hobbies. But any common ground provides potential for community. For example, the consumer of a product who has specific needs or support issues may find themselves part of a community – both with other consumers with similar (or indeed different) needs and the staff of the company who provided the product.

Community brings...

A sense of loyalty and bonding to a site and the services or products it provides. A consumer who feels closely connected to an organization is more likely to initiate and then continue to visit and/or purchase services/products from that organization and participate in propagating the brand to others.

Community participants are more inclined than non-participants to share their experiences with other consumers via word of mouth. Communities create prolific viral marketing effects.

For example, a potential consumer visits a software company's community with a view to gaining insight into a particular product before purchasing. Both company representatives and fellow consumers become valuable informational resources. The latter often perform a significant surrogate sales representative role via their feedback, experiences and recommendations.

Both prior to and after purchase, the interaction between consumers and between a consumer and the supplier assists in generating sales and building long-term loyalty.

Services and products that are talked about tend to sell and be utilized.

Repeat visits. Community members re-visit their communities more often, by definition. They also, according to research, are on the one hand more likely to purchase, and on the other more likely to purchase in greater quantities than single-visit users.

Interactivity. Community components are an excellent way to promote services/products available on the site. Consumers often lack awareness of what a company or its site offers to them. Site owners can utilize conversations within chat or message boards to point members in the direction of services or products or areas of the web site that would be of assistance.

Community as Content Generator. Community also serves as an excellent means to create content. This can be achieved by encouraging participation in the form of soliciting reactions to static content on the site. Linking community facilities to articles present on the site encourages discussions and interactions. Such community content then in itself becomes content for other participants to view and contribute to and can form the basis for more site content. Community therefore creates powerful content cycles.

Participant “buy in”. Site visitors who have a place to connect and share gain a sense of belonging. This especially occurs when individuals are spotlighted or rewarded on the site for the contributions they make in the community. For example, by highlighting a member’s message board post on the main page of the site, not only will this encourage that member to continue to participate, but it will spur further conversation among new and regular visitors. Community rewards individuals for their participation, makes them feel valued and increases their “buy-in”.

Ongoing Consumer Research. Community, as a place where visitors and consumers can air opinions, provides continuous feedback - unlike a survey which might be distributed in a one-off or periodical fashion. This gives organizations an advantage in the development of additional services or the improvement of existing ones. Organizations that are equipped with this information from existing and potential consumers tend to be the recognized leaders in their field, have strong and trusted branding, and a high recommendation rate.

In the current climate, companies need to fight hard to differentiate themselves from their competitors and strengthen customer loyalty.

By employing strategies to enhance interaction, companies can enhance their brand, build customer bases, exploit viral marketing, advance their site content and spur e-commerce.

Online community provides the means to power such interaction.

Why choose CornerWays?

CornerWays, LLC, an international community development and design firm based in Phoenix, AZ and the United Kingdom possesses 16 years of experience in the community development industry. We have the experience to encourage quality exchange on client web sites through such innovative means as chat, message boards, live events, focus groups, polls and surveys, as well as strong consulting, development and design services.

Building long and productive relationships with our clients, we work alongside them to provide tailored, dynamic and comprehensive development services that ensure a client's full range of needs are met.

Serving organizations from the non-profit to the music industry, our services have enabled clients to; attract and retain consumers on their sites, better communicate with their consumers and staff, develop a safe and attractive venue to bring individuals together to collaborate, strengthen their branding and increase their revenue.

We are not a company that believes that community should have to cost an arm and a leg. We are experienced and flexible enough to provide solutions which will enhance an organization's profit; not drain it.

[Contact us](#) today and find out how you can leverage the internet to enhance, increase and support your web presence and exposure.