

HUSTLE MAG

Hustle in Silence.

EDITION 023

VOLUME II

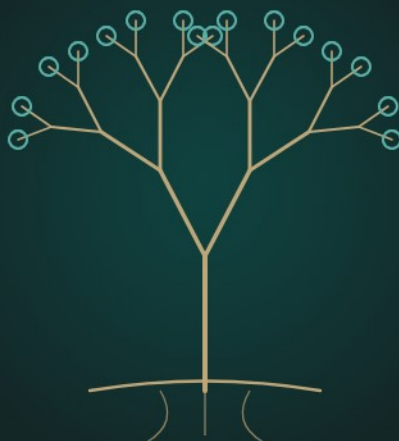
PREMIUM EDITION

FOUNDATIONS

Communities that last

GROWTH

Your first members



CULTURE

Culture and moderation

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustaining it without burnout

THE COVER STORY

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Creating Communities Around Shared Goals, Not Products

HUSTLE MAG — THE COMPLETE BUSINESS COLLECTION · EDITION 023

From the Editors

The word "community" has become fashionable in business. Many brands claim to have one; fewer genuinely do. A community is not an audience, a mailing list or a social media following. It is a group of people who share a goal, help one another and return because the group itself is valuable to them.

When a business builds a genuine community, something remarkable happens. Members answer each other's questions, celebrate each other's progress and stay connected long after a single purchase. The business becomes the host of something larger than its products.

This issue explains how to build that kind of community, and how to avoid the common trap of starting a group that quickly falls silent. We look at purpose, platform and first members, then at the activities, culture and moderation that bring a community to life. We consider how to sustain it without exhausting the founder, and how a community fits into a healthy business.

Start small. Serve the members you have. A community of thirty engaged people is worth far more than three thousand who never speak.

The Editors, Hustle Mag

EDITION 023 · COMMUNITY BUILDING

Contents

	From the Editors	2
	In This Issue	4
	COMMUNITY BUILDING	
01	Communities That Last	5
	COVER STORY	
02	Defining the Purpose	12
	FOUNDATIONS	
03	Choosing a Home for Your Community	18
	PLATFORM	
04	Your First Members	24
	GROWTH	
05	Bringing a Community to Life	30
	ENGAGEMENT	
06	Moderation and Culture	37
	CULTURE	
07	Sustaining It Without Burnout	44
	SUSTAINABILITY	
08	Community as Part of the Business	51
	STRATEGY	
	Your Action Plan	57
	THIRTY DAYS, FOUR STEPS	

Community Building

Creating Communities Around Shared Goals, Not Products

A genuine community connects people around a shared goal, gives them a place to learn and contribute and makes each member more likely to stay, succeed and recommend the business that hosts it.

This issue builds a community step by step. We begin with why some communities last and others fade, then define a clear purpose and choose a home. We bring in the first members, create activities that bring the community to life and establish culture and moderation. We finish with sustaining the community and connecting it to the business.

Each article ends with one step towards a community people value.

The theme: Creating communities around shared goals rather than products.

COVER STORY · 4 MIN READ

01

Communities That Last

People stay in communities that help them make progress and make them feel they belong.

FIGURE 01 · COMMUNITIES THAT LAST

Audience or community?

AUDIENCE	COMMUNITY
Listens to you	Members talk with each other
Host answers everything	Members answer each other
Grows by numbers	Grows by engagement
Built around a product	Built around a shared goal

Many businesses launch online groups, forums or membership communities with great enthusiasm. A few weeks later, activity slows, posts go unanswered and the community quietly fades. Lasting communities are different. Members return because the community helps them, connects them with others and gives them a sense of belonging.

Understanding why communities succeed helps you build one that lasts.

A community is not an audience

An audience listens to you. A community talks with each other. Social media followers, newsletter subscribers and customers are audiences. A community exists when members interact, help one another and contribute to a shared purpose.

The business may host the community, but members create

much of its value.

Shared goals create connection

Successful communities are built around a shared goal or interest: learning a skill, growing a business, improving health, pursuing a hobby or solving a common problem. The goal gives members a reason to participate.

A community built only around a product often struggles, because people rarely want to talk about a product every day.

Belonging matters

People stay where they feel welcome, understood and valued. Belonging comes from recognition, shared experiences, respectful interactions and the sense that others care about their progress.

Even small gestures, such as welcoming new members personally, contribute to belonging.

Members need to make progress

Communities last when members gain practical value: answers to questions, feedback, accountability, encouragement, opportunities or new skills. If members do not benefit, participation declines.

Contribution creates commitment

When members contribute, by answering questions, sharing experiences or helping others, they become more invested in the community. Encourage participation rather than relying entirely on the host to provide content.

“Even small gestures, such as welcoming new members personally, contribute to belonging.”

Consistency builds habits

Regular activities create reasons to return: weekly discussions, monthly events, challenges or recurring updates. Predictable rhythms help members build habits around participation.

Leadership is visible

Communities need hosts who set the tone, welcome members, encourage participation and maintain standards. As the community grows, trusted members can share some leadership responsibilities.

Start small

Large communities often begin with a small group of engaged members. A small, active community provides stronger foundations than a large group with little interaction.

Measure engagement, not size

Membership numbers can be misleading. Look at active participation, return visits, discussions started, questions answered and member feedback. Engagement shows whether the community is healthy.

Common mistakes

Businesses often build communities around products instead of shared goals, focus on growth before engagement, post content without encouraging conversation or neglect moderation. Others expect communities to grow automatically. Purpose, belonging, value and consistent leadership create lasting communities.

An example in practice

A small business coach created an online group for clients, but activity remained low because posts were mainly announcements. She reorganised the group around a shared goal: helping members grow their businesses.

Weekly discussion prompts, monthly live sessions and opportunities for members to share progress transformed the group into an active community where members regularly helped each other.

Signs of a healthy community

Healthy communities show recognisable signs: members answer each other's questions before the host does, new members are welcomed by others, discussions continue without prompting and members return regularly. If the host must start every conversation and answer every question, the community is still an audience, and needs more opportunities for members to connect.

Community and customers

A community can serve customers, prospects or both. Customer communities help people get better results and increase retention. Prospect communities build trust before purchase. Many small businesses start with customers, because their shared experience of the product gives conversations an immediate, practical focus.

THE TAKEAWAY

Communities last when they create belonging and progress around a shared goal. **Define the goal your community would help members achieve, identify how members could help one another and choose one regular activity that would give them a reason to return.**

02

Defining the Purpose

A clear purpose tells people why the community exists and whether it is for them.

FIGURE 02 · PURPOSE

A purpose statement, part by part

PART	EXAMPLE
Who it is for	Independent café owners
Shared goal	Improve profitability
Value	Practical ideas and mutual support
Not for	Unrelated promotion or politics

Every successful community has a clear purpose. Without one, conversations drift, members struggle to understand why they should participate and the community becomes difficult to manage. A defined purpose helps attract the right members and guides decisions about content, activities and rules.

Purpose answers a simple question: why does this community exist?

Who is it for?

Start by defining the people the community serves. Be specific. A community for "entrepreneurs" is broad. A community for "freelance designers building their first agency" is clearer and more likely to attract members with shared needs.

A clear audience makes conversations more relevant.

What shared goal unites members?

Identify the goal or challenge members have in common. Examples include learning a skill, launching a business, improving fitness, gardening in small spaces or growing a local business.

The shared goal should be meaningful enough that members want to return regularly.

What value will members receive?

Define what members gain from joining: support, accountability, expert guidance, feedback, networking, resources, inspiration or friendships. Value should be practical and easy to understand.

What makes it different?

Consider why someone should join your community rather than other groups. Perhaps it offers expert moderation, a focused audience, practical resources or a supportive culture.

Write a purpose statement

Summarise the community in one or two sentences. For example:

A community for independent café owners who want to improve profitability, share practical ideas and support each other

through the challenges of running a small hospitality business.

Use this statement on invitation pages, onboarding messages and community descriptions.

“Decide what falls outside the community's purpose, such as unrelated promotions, political debates or topics unrelated to members' goals.”

Define what the community is not

Clarity also comes from boundaries. Decide what falls outside the community's purpose, such as unrelated promotions, political debates or topics unrelated to members' goals.

Boundaries help maintain focus.

Align with your business

A community should support your business goals without becoming purely promotional. For example, a community around a course may help students apply what they learn, increasing results and retention.

Members should feel that the community serves them first.

Review purpose as the community grows

As members join and needs evolve, revisit the purpose. Ensure it still reflects what members value. Adjust if necessary while maintaining a clear focus.

Common mistakes

Communities often fail because their purpose is vague, they try to serve everyone, they focus mainly on promoting products or they lack clear boundaries. Others never communicate their purpose to members. A specific, value-focused purpose provides direction.

An example in practice

A fitness studio launched an online group for "anyone interested in health". Conversations were scattered and engagement was low. It redefined the purpose as a community for busy parents building strength in thirty minutes a day. Members immediately recognised whether the community was right for them, discussions became more focused and participation increased.

Testing your purpose

Share your purpose statement with five people who would be ideal members and ask two questions: Would you join? What would you hope to get from it? If their answers match your intention, the purpose is clear. If they are unsure or

describe something different, sharpen the statement before inviting anyone else.

Purpose and guidelines together

Your purpose should shape your community guidelines. If the purpose is mutual support for café owners, guidelines might encourage sharing practical experience, discourage unrelated promotion and ask members to keep financial details private. Purpose explains why the community exists; guidelines explain how members behave within it.

Purpose in practice

A clear purpose shows up everywhere: in the welcome message, the topics of weekly discussions, the events you host and the questions you encourage. When a new idea arrives, ask whether it serves the shared goal. If it does not, it probably belongs elsewhere, however interesting it seems.

THE TAKEAWAY

A clear purpose attracts the right members and keeps the community focused. **Write a short purpose statement describing who the community is for, the shared goal, the value members receive and what falls outside its focus.**

03

Choosing a Home for Your Community

*Choose the platform your members will actually visit,
and that you can manage well.*

Communities can live in many places: social media groups, messaging apps, forums, membership platforms, email groups, video meeting spaces or in-person events. Each option has advantages and limitations. The right choice depends on your members' habits, your goals and your capacity to manage the community.

A community thrives when members find it easy and natural to participate.

Start with member habits

Consider where your members already spend time and how they prefer to communicate. Some audiences use social platforms daily. Others prefer email, messaging apps or professional forums. Choosing a familiar platform reduces barriers to participation.

Consider ownership and control

Some platforms give you more control over member data, design, rules and access. Others are easier to start but subject to platform changes. Consider how important ownership and long-term stability are for your community.

Evaluate features

Different platforms offer different features: discussion threads, live events, direct messaging, member profiles, content libraries, moderation tools and payment options.

Choose features that support your community's purpose.

Avoid platforms with complex features members will not use.

Think about privacy

Members may share personal experiences, business challenges or sensitive information. Consider privacy settings, moderation tools and whether discussions should be public or private. Follow relevant data protection requirements.

Consider cost

Free platforms can be useful for testing. Paid platforms may provide greater control and features. Consider both financial cost and the time required to manage the platform.

Keep it simple

Members should be able to join, find discussions and participate easily. A complicated sign-up process or confusing interface can discourage engagement.

“Consider privacy settings, moderation tools and whether discussions should be public or private.”

Test before committing

Start with a small group and test the platform. Gather feedback about usability, notifications and participation. Changing platforms later is possible but can disrupt the community.

Plan moderation

Choose a platform with moderation tools that allow you to remove inappropriate content, manage members and enforce guidelines. Moderation becomes increasingly important as the community grows.

Combine with other channels

Many communities use more than one channel. For example, a membership platform may host discussions, while email announces events and video meetings provide live interaction. Keep the main community home clear to avoid fragmentation.

Common mistakes

Businesses often choose platforms because they are fashionable, select tools with features members do not need or spread the community across too many channels. Others ignore privacy and moderation requirements. Choosing a simple, member-friendly platform improves participation.

An example in practice

A cooking school launched a community on a dedicated platform with many advanced features, but few students participated because they had to remember another login. After surveying members, the school moved the community to a private group on a platform students already used daily and kept live sessions on video calls. Participation increased significantly.

Questions to ask before choosing

Ask five questions: Where do my members already spend time? Will they receive notifications they actually see? Can I moderate effectively? Who owns the member list if the platform changes? Can I manage it with the time I have? The platform that answers these questions best is usually the right home, even if it lacks the newest features.

Moving platforms later

If you outgrow your first platform, move deliberately: explain the reasons to members, give plenty of notice, help them set up access and keep both spaces open briefly during the transition. A well-managed move can strengthen a community; a sudden one can scatter it.

Notifications and attention

A community's success often depends on notifications. If members do not see when others reply, conversations stall. Check how the platform notifies members, help them set preferences during onboarding and avoid platforms where notifications are easily buried or ignored by your particular audience.

THE TAKEAWAY

Choose a community platform that fits member habits and your management capacity. **Survey five potential members about where they prefer to connect, compare two platform options for ownership, features, privacy and simplicity, and test one with a small group.**

GROWTH · 4 MIN READ

04

Your First Members

The first members set the culture. Choose and welcome them with care.

The first members of a community have a disproportionate influence on its culture. They establish how people interact, what topics are discussed and how newcomers are welcomed. A small group of engaged early members can create a foundation for long-term success.

Rather than trying to attract as many members as possible at the start, focus on attracting the right members.

Start small

Many successful communities begin with ten to thirty founding members. A smaller group allows you to build relationships, encourage participation and refine the community before expanding.

Small groups also make conversations feel more personal.

Invite people personally

Invite potential members individually rather than through broad announcements. Explain why you think they would benefit from the community and contribute to it.

Personal invitations make people feel valued and increase the likelihood of participation.

Choose contributors

Look for people who share the community's goals and are

likely to contribute: asking thoughtful questions, sharing experiences, helping others or offering encouragement. Engaged members create momentum.

Explain expectations

Tell founding members what the community is for, how it works and what kind of participation you hope for. Clear expectations help create a positive culture from the beginning.

Welcome each member

Greet new members personally. Introduce them to others, encourage them to share a little about themselves and suggest a first discussion to join. A warm welcome increases engagement.

Create early wins

Help founding members gain value quickly. Answer questions, facilitate useful discussions, share resources or organise a small event. Early benefits encourage members to return.

“Tell founding members what the community is for, how it works and what kind of participation you hope for.”

Ask for feedback

Founding members can help shape the community. Ask what they value, what could improve and what activities they would like. Involving members builds ownership.

Recognise contributions

Thank members who answer questions, welcome others or share valuable insights. Recognition encourages continued participation and sets positive examples.

Grow gradually

Once the community is active and the culture is established, invite additional members gradually. Rapid growth can overwhelm discussions and dilute culture.

Common mistakes

Businesses often open communities to large audiences immediately, invite people without explaining the purpose, neglect onboarding or fail to recognise early contributors.

Others focus only on member numbers. A small, carefully welcomed founding group creates stronger foundations.

An example in practice

A financial planner launched a community for self-employed professionals by personally inviting twenty clients and contacts who shared similar goals. He welcomed each member individually, introduced them to others and hosted a small monthly discussion. Members quickly began helping one another. When the community later opened to new members, its supportive culture was already established.

A founding member invitation

A personal invitation might read: "I'm starting a small group for independent café owners who want to share practical ideas on running a profitable business. I'm inviting twenty people I think would both benefit and contribute, and you were one of the first who came to mind. Would you like to join as a founding member? It will be private, practical and free of sales pitches."

Learning from the first month

At the end of the first month, review what happened: which discussions attracted the most replies, which members contributed most, what questions went unanswered and what members said they valued. Use these lessons to adjust

activities and onboarding before inviting the next group of members.

Choosing a launch moment

Plan a short launch period for founding members: a welcome event or live session, a first discussion everyone can contribute to and a simple introductions thread. A shared starting moment helps members meet one another at once, rather than arriving one by one into a quiet space.

THE TAKEAWAY

The first members shape the community's culture. **Personally invite ten to thirty people who share the community's goal, welcome each one individually, create an early opportunity for them to gain value and ask for their feedback before expanding.**

05

Bringing a Community to Life

Regular rhythms, good questions and member contributions keep conversations going.

FIGURE 05 · BRINGING IT TO LIFE

A simple weekly rhythm

MONDAY	A discussion prompt on the shared goal.
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Question

WEDNESDAY	A tip or tool, with an invitation to share.
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Resource

FRIDAY	Members share progress.
---------------	-------------------------

Wins

MONTHLY	Questions, guests or member showcases.
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Live session

A community needs more than members. It needs activity that gives people reasons to return, participate and connect. Many communities become quiet because members are unsure what to discuss or how to contribute. Thoughtful activities and a consistent rhythm can transform a silent group into an active community.

The goal is to create opportunities for meaningful interaction.

Create regular rhythms

Predictable activities help members build habits. Examples include:

- Weekly discussion prompts.
- Monthly live sessions or workshops.

- Regular wins or progress threads.
- Question-and-answer sessions.
- Seasonal challenges.

A consistent schedule gives members reasons to return.

Ask good questions

Open questions encourage participation. Instead of "Any questions?", ask "What is one challenge you faced this week?" or "What strategy has worked best for finding new clients?" Good questions invite stories and experiences.

Encourage member contributions

Communities become stronger when members create value for each other. Invite members to share lessons, answer questions, post resources or lead discussions. Highlight useful contributions.

Celebrate progress

Create opportunities for members to share achievements, milestones and lessons learned. Celebrating progress builds motivation and belonging.

Host live interactions

Live events, whether online or in person, create stronger connections than text discussions alone. Members can meet one another, ask questions and build relationships.

Record sessions where appropriate for members who cannot attend.

“Help members connect by introducing people with similar interests or complementary experience.”

Introduce members to each other

Help members connect by introducing people with similar interests or complementary experience. Connections between members increase the community's value.

Provide useful resources

Share templates, guides, recordings or curated resources that support members' goals. Resources can spark discussion and provide practical value.

Respond consistently

When members post, respond promptly and encourage others to join the conversation. Unanswered posts can discourage participation.

Experiment and learn

Try different activities and observe what generates engagement. Ask members which activities they find most valuable and adjust accordingly.

Common mistakes

Communities often become quiet because hosts post announcements without inviting conversation, run activities inconsistently, ignore member posts or rely entirely on the host to create content. Others try too many activities at once. Regular rhythms, good questions and member participation create lasting engagement.

An example in practice

A small photography community struggled with low activity. The founder introduced three recurring activities: a Monday photo challenge, a mid-week editing question and a monthly live critique session. She highlighted helpful member feedback and invited experienced members to lead occasional discussions. Participation increased steadily, and members began organising informal meetups.

A simple weekly rhythm

One manageable rhythm for a small community: Monday, a discussion question related to the shared goal; Wednesday, a useful resource or tip with an invitation to share

experiences; Friday, a wins thread where members share progress. Add one live session each month. Four touchpoints a week are enough to keep conversations going without overwhelming the host.

Quiet members matter too

Many members read without posting, and still gain value. Encourage participation gently: welcome posts that invite a one-line introduction, polls that take seconds to answer and questions with easy answers. Over time, small contributions build confidence for larger ones.

Watching what works

Track simple signals each month: which posts received the most replies, which events had the best attendance and which members contributed most. Do more of what generates conversation and quietly retire activities that consistently fall flat.

Events that bring people together

Occasional special events, such as an expert guest session, a member showcase or a seasonal challenge, create peaks of energy that strengthen connections. Plan two or three a year, announce them well in advance and follow up with recordings or summaries for members who could not attend.

THE TAKEAWAY

Communities thrive on regular rhythms and meaningful participation. **Choose one weekly activity and one monthly event for your community, ask one open question that invites experiences and highlight member contributions every week.**

CULTURE · 4 MIN READ

06

Moderation and Culture

*Culture is shaped by what the host encourages,
tolerates and models.*

Every community develops a culture: shared norms about how members communicate, help one another and behave. A positive culture makes members feel safe, respected and motivated to contribute. A negative culture can drive valuable members away. Moderation helps protect the culture as the community grows.

Culture is shaped by clear expectations, consistent leadership and fair moderation.

Define community guidelines

Write simple guidelines explaining how members should behave. Include expectations about respect, relevant topics, self-promotion, privacy and how disagreements should be handled.

Keep guidelines short and easy to understand.

Model the behaviour you want

Hosts and moderators set the tone. Respond respectfully, welcome new members, acknowledge contributions and handle disagreements calmly. Members often mirror the behaviour of leaders.

Welcome newcomers

A warm welcome helps new members feel included. Encourage experienced members to greet newcomers and

help them get started.

Inclusive communities retain members more effectively.

Encourage constructive discussion

Disagreements can be valuable when they remain respectful and focused on ideas. Encourage members to share different perspectives while avoiding personal attacks.

Moderate consistently

Apply guidelines fairly and consistently. Remove spam, harmful content or behaviour that violates community standards. Explain decisions where appropriate.

Inconsistent moderation can create confusion and resentment.

Address problems early

Small issues can grow if ignored. Address inappropriate behaviour promptly, privately where possible. Early intervention often prevents larger conflicts.

“Establish clear rules about sharing screenshots or content outside the community.”

Protect privacy

Remind members not to share sensitive personal information and respect the privacy of others. Establish clear rules about sharing screenshots or content outside the community.

Develop community leaders

As the community grows, trusted members can help moderate discussions, welcome newcomers or lead activities. Shared leadership reduces pressure on the host and strengthens member ownership.

Review guidelines periodically

Community needs change over time. Review guidelines regularly and update them based on member feedback and new challenges.

Common mistakes

Communities often lack clear guidelines, moderate

inconsistently, allow excessive self-promotion or ignore early conflicts. Others create overly strict rules that discourage participation. Clear, fair and consistently applied standards create healthier communities.

An example in practice

A small business community became dominated by members posting advertisements, causing others to stop participating. The host introduced clear guidelines, created a weekly thread for promotions and removed posts that broke the rules. Discussions became more helpful, and members who had left began returning.

A short set of guidelines

Many communities need only five or six guidelines: be respectful and constructive; stay on topic; share experience, not sales pitches, outside the promotion thread; keep others' information private; give credit when sharing someone else's work; and contact the host privately about any problems. Pin the guidelines, link to them in welcome messages and refer to them when moderating.

Handling a difficult member

When a member repeatedly breaks the guidelines, start with a private, friendly message explaining the issue and the relevant guideline. If the behaviour continues, issue a clear final warning. Only then consider removal. Calm,

private and consistent handling protects the community while treating the member fairly.

Celebrating the culture you want

Culture grows from what is noticed and praised. Regularly highlight members who welcome newcomers, give thoughtful answers or share generously. Public recognition shows everyone what good participation looks like, far more effectively than rules alone.

Culture as the community grows

As membership increases, culture can drift. New members may not know the norms that early members took for granted. Reinforce culture through onboarding messages, pinned guidelines, examples of great contributions and active welcomes. The larger the community, the more deliberately culture must be taught.

Onboarding as culture

The welcome a new member receives teaches them how the community works. A short welcome message explaining the purpose, guidelines and a good first step, followed by a friendly reply to their introduction, sets expectations far more effectively than a long rulebook.

THE TAKEAWAY

Culture is built through clear guidelines, positive leadership and fair moderation. **Write a short set of community guidelines, model respectful behaviour in your interactions and address any problematic behaviour early and consistently.**

07

Sustaining It Without Burnout

A community should not depend entirely on one person's energy. Build systems and share leadership.

FIGURE 07 · SUSTAINING IT

A sustainable time budget

ACTIVITY	TIME EACH WEEK
Schedule prompts and resources	30 minutes
Welcome members and reply	Short daily check-ins
Monthly live session	About 1 hour a month
Support volunteer leaders	15 minutes

One to three hours a week is enough for a healthy small community.

Many founders start communities with enthusiasm, answering every question, creating content daily and hosting frequent events. Over time, the workload grows and the founder becomes exhausted. If the community depends entirely on one person, activity may decline when that person becomes busy or unavailable.

Sustainable communities rely on systems, shared leadership and realistic commitments.

Set realistic expectations

Decide how much time you can consistently dedicate to the community. Plan activities that fit within that time. It is better to run one valuable monthly event than to promise weekly events you cannot sustain.

Create recurring systems

Use recurring formats, scheduled posts, templates and content calendars to reduce the effort required to keep the community active. Systems make it easier to maintain consistency during busy periods.

Encourage member participation

The healthiest communities are not driven only by the host. Encourage members to answer questions, share resources, start discussions and support one another. Member participation reduces the host's workload and increases engagement.

Develop community leaders

Identify members who regularly contribute and invite them to take on small roles: welcoming newcomers, moderating discussions or hosting occasional sessions. Recognise their contributions and support them.

Use automation carefully

Automation can handle welcome messages, event reminders and recurring prompts. However, personal interaction remains important. Use automation to support the community, not replace genuine engagement.

Set boundaries

Define when you will respond to messages and participate in discussions. Communicate these boundaries clearly to members. Not every question requires an immediate response.

Boundaries protect your energy and help create a sustainable rhythm.

“Member participation reduces the host's workload and increases engagement.”

Simplify where possible

Review community activities periodically. Remove activities that require significant effort but provide little value. Focus on the activities members appreciate most.

Plan for breaks

Holidays, busy seasons and personal circumstances happen. Prepare content in advance, share responsibilities with trusted members and let members know when you will be less available.

Monitor workload

Track how much time the community requires and whether it creates enough value for members and your business. Adjust the approach if workload becomes unsustainable.

Common mistakes

Founders often try to answer every question personally, create too many activities, avoid delegating responsibilities or neglect their own boundaries. Others abandon communities suddenly when overwhelmed. Systems, shared leadership and realistic commitments create sustainability.

An example in practice

A fitness coach ran a large online community and spent several hours every day answering questions and posting content. She felt exhausted and engagement began to decline. She introduced weekly discussion themes, monthly live sessions and a small team of volunteer member moderators. Members began supporting one another more actively, and the coach reduced her daily involvement while maintaining a vibrant community.

A sustainable weekly time budget

For a small business, one to three hours a week is often enough to run a healthy community: thirty minutes to schedule prompts and resources, short daily check-ins to welcome members and respond, and one monthly live session. Track your actual time for a month. If it consistently exceeds your budget, simplify activities or share responsibilities before exhaustion sets in.

Supporting volunteer leaders

Volunteer moderators and leaders need support: clear guidance, a private space to discuss issues, recognition for their work and permission to step back when they need to. Thank them publicly and privately. A small, well-supported group of member leaders can sustain a community for years.

Knowing when to change course

If a community consistently requires more effort than the value it creates, consider simplifying it, merging it with another channel or closing it respectfully. Ending a community clearly and kindly is far better than letting it decline into silence.

THE TAKEAWAY

Sustainable communities rely on systems and shared leadership. **Estimate how much time you can dedicate to your community each week, create one recurring activity system and invite one or two engaged members to help welcome newcomers or support discussions.**

STRATEGY · 4 MIN READ

08

Community as Part of the Business

A healthy community supports customers, products and growth, when members always come first.

A community can create significant value for a business. It can improve customer results, increase retention, generate feedback, strengthen relationships and attract new members through recommendations. However, communities that feel purely promotional often lose trust and engagement.

The most successful business communities serve members first while supporting business goals naturally.

Improve customer outcomes

Communities help customers learn from one another, solve problems and stay motivated. Customers who achieve better results are more likely to remain loyal and recommend your business.

For courses, software or memberships, a community can significantly increase engagement.

Gather feedback and ideas

Community discussions reveal customer challenges, questions and ideas. These insights can guide product improvements, new services and content.

Ask members for feedback directly and observe recurring themes.

Strengthen retention

Members who feel connected to a community often stay longer because they value both the product and the relationships they have built. Community can become part of the reason customers continue buying.

Support marketing ethically

A thriving community can attract new members through word of mouth, testimonials and visible success stories. Share member achievements with permission and highlight how the community helps people.

Avoid using members' contributions without consent.

Offer additional value

Communities can provide opportunities for premium experiences, such as workshops, coaching, events or advanced programmes. Offer these only when they genuinely help members and complement the community's purpose.

Avoid excessive promotion

Members join communities for value and connection, not constant sales messages. Promotions should be relevant, occasional and clearly beneficial.

Maintaining trust is more important than short-term sales.

“Communities can provide opportunities for premium experiences, such as workshops, coaching, events or advanced programmes.”

Measure business impact

Track how the community affects retention, customer satisfaction, product usage, referrals and revenue.

Combine these metrics with member feedback to understand the community's overall value.

Integrate with the customer experience

Introduce the community during onboarding, connect it with product support and encourage members to share progress. A community works best when it is part of the overall customer journey.

Review alignment regularly

Ensure the community continues to serve both members and the business. If engagement declines or members feel the community has become too promotional, adjust the strategy.

Common mistakes

Businesses often treat communities as marketing channels, promote products too frequently, use member content without permission or fail to connect the community to customer outcomes. Others measure only membership numbers. A member-first approach creates long-term business value.

An example in practice

An online course creator added a private community for students. Initially, she used it mainly to announce new courses, and participation remained low. She refocused the community on helping students complete projects, sharing member success stories and hosting monthly question sessions. Course completion rates increased, students stayed longer and many purchased advanced programmes because they had achieved results with the first course.

Measuring community value

Compare customers who participate in the community with those who do not on a few measures: retention, results achieved, repeat purchases and referrals. If community members consistently perform better, the community is creating real business value, which justifies continued investment of time and care.

Starting with what you have

You do not need a large customer base to begin. A community of twenty engaged customers can still improve results, reveal valuable feedback and generate recommendations. Start with the customers you already serve, focus on helping them succeed and let the community grow from genuine value rather than promotion.

Keeping the community independent of sales

Members trust a community more when it is clearly separate from selling. Some businesses keep offers to a dedicated announcements space, or mention them only when members ask. This separation protects the community's atmosphere while still allowing members to learn about paid options when they need them.

THE TAKEAWAY

A community creates business value when it serves members first. **Identify how your community could improve customer results, add one way to gather member feedback and track one business metric, such as retention or referrals, connected to community participation.**

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS ISSUE

Your Action Plan

Turn what you have read into the next thirty days.

Your next 30 days

Week 1: Define the purpose. Write who the community is for, the shared goal and what members will gain.

Week 2: Choose a home and rules. Pick one platform and write a short set of community guidelines.

Week 3: Invite founding members. Personally invite ten to thirty people who share the goal and would contribute.

Week 4: Start a rhythm. Run one recurring activity, such as a weekly question or monthly session, and welcome every new member personally.

Keep learning

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