MODERN MARKETING ESSENTIALS

Grande Guide to Community Management



ORACLE | eloqua

What Is a Grande Guide?

You know what the typical day is like for marketers. Between brainstorming and strategy sessions, last-minute requests and impromptu meetings, and trips to meet customers, you can barely find time to breathe—never mind keep up with the latest marketing trends. That's why Oracle Eloqua developed the Grande Guide series. The Grande Guides were developed to give you the opportunity to become proficient in a key marketing topic—in this case, community management—with a minimal investment in time.

As businesses communicate over a growing number of social networks—such as online forums, content hosting sites, brand communities and Q&A sites—the pressure to scale participation expands. That's where a community manager comes in.

This Grande Guide was written by **Brett Petersel**, Co-founder of **The Community Manager**, and Eloqua's Jesse Noyes, along with additional contributions generously provided by Nate McGee, past Sr. Manager Social and Community Engagement at **Provo Craft**, and Alan Belniak, Global Director of Social Media at **Parametric Technology (PTC)**, and Lauren Harper, Community Manager at Eloqua.

What is Community Management?

Community management has become one of the most important, yet least understood roles in marketing. A good community manager acts as a bridge between the internal and external stakeholders in your brand by performing three critical functions:

Customer Advocate: No matter what you sell, you have customers—hopefully, many of them.

Social media has dramatically amplified the power of word of mouth. Now your customers can reach hundreds, maybe thousands of their friends—even their friends' friends. Positive or negative feedback gets amplified and this can have either an uplifting or chilling impact on your company's brand.

A community manager monitors what people are saying about you and your competitors, initiates a dialogue, or routes questions or comments to a subject matter expert. Like a telephone operator, he or she makes sure the correct parties connect.

Company Glue: Community management is a cross-functional role that serves customers by bringing together representatives from disparate departments. A strong community manager builds relationships with research & development, customer service, human resources, product management, and, of course, marketing to make sure the information the public receives is accurate and on-message.

Creative Kickstarter: Public discussion isn't always a cacophony of complaints. Customers often share ideas for new products, additional features, or product enhancements. The community manager is responsible for spreading these ideas internally. In other words, community managers not only spark external dialogue, they also foster internal conversation.



FIGURE 1. THE MANY ROLES OF THE COMMUNITY MANAGER

Why Does My Business Need to Understand Community Management?

While businesses have always had to respond to customer needs, the advent of the Internet and social media has made the airing of opinions, grievances and, yes, praise far more public. Consider this: according to data assembled by ZenDesk, 62 percent of consumers are already using social media for customer service issues. 38 percent of bloggers discuss brands they love or hate, according to Technorati's State of the Blogosphere report.

Those that don't listen and respond to feedback on the web lose an opportunity to retain customers, or, at the very least, understand why they are experiencing churn. Sadly, while many consumer brands have made investments in this area, B2B brands—where negative feedback can make or break a deal—lag behind in terms of adoption.

As the vanguard of the organization on the social web, the community manager helps reduce churn, uncover upsell opportunities, avoid and diffuse crises, identify PR opportunities, marshal advocates, assuage detractors, monitor competitors, and identify new product ideas.

A community manager acts as a buffer between a company and its customers, and performs many tasks including fielding complaints and using modern communication skills to address external issues with internal solutions. You wouldn't typically want to put a developer on the phone with a customer to tell them why your service isn't working, but the community manager has the right balance of technical understanding and compassion to explain it to them.

The community manager can also contribute to two other important—and often expensive—functions: marketing research and competitive intelligence.

Since a community manager spends each day digging deep into the conversations your customers and prospects are having, they often know what innovations are in demand. The magazines and blogs might argue you need to jump on the latest gadget, but your customers may be begging for something less sexy. With that knowledge in house, your marketing and sales teams will be poised to identify new revenue streams, product categories, and opportunities to upsell.

The community manager is often the go-to employee when you want to know what the competition is up to. They spend much of their time monitoring what content, promotion, and products are rolling out across various social and publishing channels. When it comes to competitive intelligence, customer sentiment, and brand promotion, the community manager can be a business' best friend.

Community Management in a Crisis

Issues are often raised on the social web before the company is even aware of a problem. In these cases, the community manager is the first to sound the alarm.

If you ever experienced a PR crisis, you know the blowback can be swift and costly. But if it's dealt with quickly and diplomatically, you can lessen the damage. The key is speed and transparency. Here's how a community manager can play a major role in a moment of crisis.

- **Monitoring:** A single Tweet about a problem with your product or service could be an isolated incident or the first sign of a more systemic problem. A community manager helps the organization get a jump on the crisis by monitoring social media sites, blogs and forums for signs of trouble.
- **Corralling the Stakeholders:** If a crisis develops, the community manager is often tasked with getting all the internal stakeholders together. It's his or her job to maintain a list of these stakeholders and to understand their role. (Depending on severity, a crisis can extend to many functions such as PR, legal, customer support, HR, security, or even the executive team.)
- **Drawing Up a Plan:** Once all the appropriate stakeholders have been informed and brought together, a plan needs to be put in place. While the community manager might not lead the execution, they will be critical in helping draw it up and then putting it into action.
- **Responding to Customers:** The community manager will work in concert with the PR and customer support teams to ensure customers' concerns are being addressed in a crisis. When a fix is not immediately available, they help reduce panic by responding that they are aware of the situation and working to correct it.
- **Prioritizing Complaints:** Not all customers are created equal. While every customer concern should be addressed when feasible, some customers might be especially influential. The community manager will know who these customers are, who is closest to them internally, and when the situation calls for a personal phone call, email or some other form of communication.
- **Signaling Resolution:** When a solution has been reached, the community manager will work to communicate across all the forums the situation reached, announcing a resolution, what the company is doing to prevent future episodes and thanking customers.

Haters Gonna' Hate, and Tweeters Gonna' Tweet

You make a seemingly innocuous Tweet, and you get slammed from left field. You posted an update about your product on your blog, and you get dinged three times from the same person about a missing feature. You feel stalked by haters, someone or some group that —for whatever reason—have it out for you.

Hater motivations come in many flavors: unsavory competitors, frustrated customers, disgruntled employees. You might feel discouraged, but there are steps you can take to deal with haters.

1 UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVATIONS

If you can get to the root cause, devising your approach and possible remediation will be easier. Some possible motivations include a feeling of being insulted, being wronged, or even a competitor looking to stir the pot.

2 KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL

Use empathy in all cases. It's easy to think that the hater's perspective is wildly inaccurate or a flat-out lie. But try for a moment to put yourself in their shoes. Can you see the source of anger or frustration? Be diplomatic and graceful. A very public and ugly fight can mean a lot is said that you'll want to take back later

3 CORRECT THE "WRONG"

Can you turn a hater into a fan? First identify if a wrong has in fact been done. Note that not all wrongs are blatant company missteps. Sometimes what a hater perceives as a wrong might not be viewed as such from your perspective. Sometimes righting a wrong is as simple as saying, "We're sorry" or owning up to a mistake.

4 USE THE SAME CHANNEL

When addressing the hater, initially use the same form of communication. If you get blasted on Twitter, Tweet back. If your editorial skills permit (and the situation calls for it), use a little humor to diffuse the situation. If you are hit publicly, then you want to acknowledge that in the same light and medium.

5 AVOID RED HERRINGS

Keep the discussion relevant to the point raised. If the hater ever moves beyond the original point, you can always revert back to the original conversation, where the boundaries and framework were set.

6 MOVE DEEP DISCUSSIONS OFFLINE

If the conversation is going beyond a message or two, invite the hater to continue the chat offline. But announce this publicly! This lets anyone who is following the conversation know that you, as a company/brand/product/person is acknowledging (and not ignoring) the hater.

7 ACT LIKE YOU'RE ON THE RECORD

Be careful what you put into a copy-able format. Your text or images can be copied and pasted, and reused elsewhere. Furthermore, they can be used out of context.

8 ANNOUNCE THE RESOLUTION

Make sure you let others know that the situation has been resolved, or at least brought to a point where you're not going to go back and forth about it frequently.

9 AND OF COURSE, DON'T CALL HATERS "HATERS".

They hate that.

Alan Belniak is Global Director of Social Media for PTC.

5 Traits of a Successful Community Manager

Many organizations set up Twitter handles and Facebook accounts, and then wait for the fans or followers to arrive. But that's just the beginning for community mangers. It takes a certain kind of professional, with a unique skill set, to successfully run and grow a business's online community. Here are the key attributes of a successful community manager.

- **Strong listening and writing skills are a must.** Remember, the community manager will spend a lot of time monitoring conversations taking place online. They'll need to have patience, not to mention the writing skills to respond concisely and convincingly—often in a mere 140 characters.
- **Commitment.** The Internet never sleeps. In all likelihood, neither does your company. Your company's online and offline activities are never truly going to be closed. In many cases, larger companies may even find themselves needing to hire regional community managers as cultural, language, and even time zone differences can play an enormous role. Sometimes they need to set expectations for when a customer can count on a response. Whatever the case, they are committed to making prospects and customers feel like they've been heard.
- **Community managers are team players.** They need to be able to gather colleagues from across the company to respond quickly to concerns voiced online. That means the community manager should know who owns which projects or where to go to find answers.
- **They need to take initiative.** You don't want a community manager who needs approval for every Tweet, nor do you want to impose strong restrictions on them. By that same token, you want someone who also isn't afraid to be able to voice an opinion or take a new direction and share that with the group. Additionally, it is often the case that a crisis, action or response needs an immediate response, you want someone who has enough common sense to address matters in a way that is trustworthy and accountable.
- **They should have an experimental side.** There are new platforms, technologies, and social networks launching every week. Your community manager's innate curiosity is invaluable in testing and evaluating these changes and determining which are viable opportunities for your brand. That kind of advice will go a long way in focusing time and effort on the right channels.

4 Ways the Community Manager Can Work Offline

The community manager role today is largely based online, but can be more effective if offline, real world functions are included. In this world consumed by technology and social media sites, you should never underestimate the power of meeting someone face-to-face. Below are just a few examples of offline events that community managers can host and/or participate in:

MEETUPS

Hosting or attending a meetup is a great way of getting people together to share knowledge. By hosting a meetup you bring customers together to share best practices and network with each other, as well as your employees. Whether it's an intimate dinner, a morning meeting, or more of an open get-together, meetups bring the online conversation offline. Going to meetups hosted by others allows you the opportunity to meet with your community members and peers. You bring the brand to them.

Meetup.com is a vast source for finding different events in your area—take advantage of it!

CONFERENCES

Hosting conferences for your community provides an ideal opportunity to detail what's happening with your company or product, and to connect with them one-on-one. Here, customers meet other customers, advocates emerge, and you strengthen the ties around your community and brand. Industry conferences are another way to engage potential prospects, consultants, and analysts. You can't underestimate the value of getting your company's brand out there by making personal—rather than virtual—connections.

HAPPY HOURS

Who doesn't love a free drink? Happy hours are a great way to get employees, customers, and prospects together when you don't necessarily have a bunch of content to present, but you want to have a casual evening of friendly networking. It's a breezy way to build affinity and advocacy.

COFFEE, LUNCHES, DINNERS

Find out when your customers, advocates, and power users will be in town and take them out to coffee, lunch, or dinner. One-on-one experiences allow you to collect feedback and establish a tight relationship with your best customers. The ability to shake someone's hand and look them in the eye has a greater impact than any conversation had online. The ideas for offline events are endless, so get out from behind your computer and do some in-person networking!

Lauren Harper
is Community Manager at Eloqua



Measuring the Community Manager's Impact

We can measure the cost of leads, how a change in price will impact sales, what regions are having the most success, even how many people click on our ads. What about the community manager's impact?

It might sound mystifying, there are several metrics you can, and should, capture when measuring the community manager's impact on your business. Specifically, you'll want to look at how he or she extends your brand's reach and recognition, the level of engagement among potential and current customers, and the effect on customer renewal and satisfaction. You should plan to chart these out on a monthly or quarterly dashboard for you (and your bosses).

The first thing you'll want to do is benchmark. You can't truly compare a community manager's effect if you don't have a baseline.

Get a measurement of how many people are following you on the social channels you actively participate in like Twitter, Facebook, SlideShare, Google+ and YouTube. Similarly, capture the number of members of your online communities, whether they are privately hosted customer communities or groups on LinkedIn. Record how many people show up at your in-person events (remember, a community manager's job isn't restricted to electronic communications). Examine how often people share your content or talk about your brand. Use social media monitoring tools to understand prospect and customer sentiment around your brand. What percentage is positive, negative or neutral?

If you have your own customer community, calculate the number of registered users and how many are actively participate on a monthly basis. And using surveys, you can get a **Net Promoter Score** (NPS), a number that tells you how likely customers are to promote your brand. No one can sell your product or service better than a current customer. Inducing advocacy among customers is a substantial way the community manager benefits your business, so tracking the number of new advocates and NPS is a good metric to provide the executive team.

Once you have this baseline, you can begin gauging the community manager's impact over time. As he or she actively shares your content and messaging on social channels, you'll want to look for a corresponding rise in the amount of people following and talking about your brand. Count the number of new "likes" on Facebook, subscribers on YouTube and members to your online customer community. Watch for rises in the amount of sharing about your brand that takes place—how many retweets, video views, and SlideShare downloads are coming in. You'll also want to gauge how you stack up against your main competitors and for key topics within your market. Put this data into the "Reach" and "Engagement" sections of your dashboard.

Customer renewal and satisfaction is the real meat of community management measurement. So you'll want to show that customers feel they're being heard and respected. You can demonstrate this effect by conducting online surveys of your customer base, determining an NPS score. As the community manager responds to customer concerns, ensuring they are getting the information they need to be successful, this score should be on the upswing.

Take a look at the members of your online communities (external and internal). For each sales cycle, track the renewal rates for customers active on these forums and those absent. Are those speaking on your LinkedIn groups, on your customer forums and following your content more likely to renew? This is the kind of data that can turn skeptics into champions.

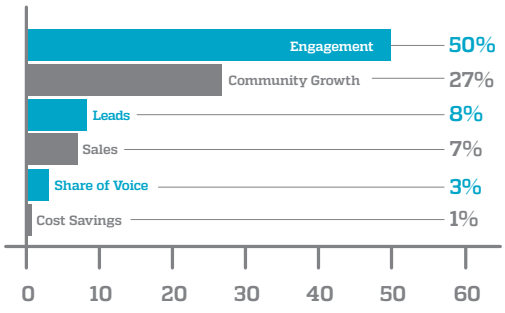


FIGURE 2. COMMUNITY MANAGERS: HOW SUCCESS IS MEASURED (304 SOCIAL MEDIA PROFESSIONALS SURVEYED ONLINE)

How Much Does a Community Manager Cost?

Maybe you're sold. You're itching to get rolling and hire a community manager. But what's it going to cost you? Luckily, there's some data out there to help you understand the general costs. According to the SocialFresh **2012 Community Manager Report**, the cost can change based on the level of responsibility and experience you're seeking. Fresh out of college candidates command close to $20,000 less than someone between 31- and 40-years old, for instance. A community manager typically pulls in far less than a director of community, who has more duties.

AVERAGE SALARIES

Community Manager	$51,647.00
Social Media Strategist	$55,806.00
Directory of Community	$77,302.00

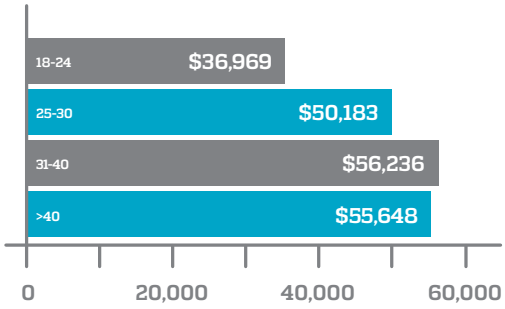


FIGURE 3. AVERAGE COMMUNITY MANAGER SALARY BY AGE (304 SOCIAL MEDIA PROFESSIONALS SURVEYED ONLINE)

How to Convince Your Executive Team to Invest in Community Management

It takes time, effort and financial investment to maintain a happy, healthy community. Most often the biggest challenge as a community manager is not the community itself, but convincing the executive team that there is value in fostering and promoting engagement. In order to win over an executive, you've got to think like an executive. It might seem perfectly logical to you: a happy community means a prosperous community. But you might need to translate for the executive crowd. In order to help your executive come to an understanding, and in turn loosen the purse strings a bit, you're going to need to speak the same language.

Is it Measurable?

Execs love charts and graphs with lines that go up and down (preferably lines that go up) and pies segmented into different colors. When prepping your pitch the first thing you should think of is what are you going to put on your chart and how will you capture the data? It could be as simple as tracking the increase in "Like" and retweets to complex sentiment analysis and producing surveys. You'll have to tap into your exec's psyche and think "what information does my exec team want to see?" You might need to do some research into the best tools to provide that data.

What is the Projected Outcome?

Execs want to know what is expected and like to hear it backed up by data. They like sentences such as: "Based on our current trend, if we implement project X, we should expect to see an increase of 45%." This demonstrates that you have a clear goal in mind. Often you might not have a projected outcome because this is the first time you will have tried anything of this sort. If this is the case, let the execs know that you are setting out on a pilot program, using the first few months to gather data, set a baseline and gain a better understanding of the potential impact for the brand.

What is the ROI?

There's a catch to the statement above. If you're asking for a small amount of money, setting a baseline may be enough to gain approval. If you're asking for a large amount of money, you most definitely need to have a clear, projected outcome. Execs want to know their money is well spent. It is best to break it down into a per point cost. For example, if you are asking for $10,000 to spend on a program that potentially will increase your Facebook "likes" by 10,000 then you are spending about $1 on each like. For this argument to work, you will first need to know the value of a "like."

How Does this Impact Revenue?

The mention of revenue may cause chills up your spine and make you want to shout, "but we're talking about people!" While you may care about the people, executives need to count the revenue. You don't have to limit your discussion to the amount of revenue coming in through community management. Ask yourself the following questions: Does it cut costs in any way? Does it save resources or employees' hours of work? Will it make the path to purchase easier? If you can make things better, faster or cheaper, calculate what that means in dollars. Then brandish that number when revenue comes up.

Does it Tie In with Key Company Goals?

There are likely a number of company goals that your community management projects align with. Does the company want to improve its reputation? Is it in the mission statement that the company provides excellent service? Look to these goals as additional ammunition to help really sell the need to invest in the community.

Now this won't guarantee that you'll be handed a blank check and told, "make it all happen," but by demonstrating the value and speaking to the executive team in a language they understand, it will help them be on board with investing into the community.

Nathan McGee has served as a community manager for the brands Zynga, Lucasfilm Ltd. and Provo Craft.

Resources

BLOGS

The Community Manager

My Community Manager

Community Roundtable

BOOKS

Unmarketing: by Scott Stratten

Engage: by Brian Solis

Customer Service: New Rules for a Social Media World: by Peter Shankman

The NOW Revolution: by Amber Nasland & Jay Baer

Online Community Management for Dummies: by DebNg

The Ultimate Question: Driving Good Profits and True Growth: by Fred Reicheld

EVENTS

The Community Manager Meetup
CM Meetup: Community Manager Appreciation Day —January 24th

Blog World & New Media Expo

COMMUNITY MANAGERS ON TWITTER

Follow Brett's Twitter List of Community Managers

Jeremiah Owyang's List of Community Managers



ORACLE | eloqua