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# **Building Online Communities**

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## INTRODUCTION

### What is Web 2.0?

We've had the opportunity at Jive to provide community & collaboration solutions to quite a few clients over the years, and have recognized some important trends that have driven the success of these customers. One thing we've noticed is a steady change to new "Web 2.0" technologies - a shifting from nouns to verbs, or from a "read-only" web to a "read & write" web.

Another way of describing Web 2.0 comes from the book "Wikinomics": "weapons of mass collaboration" that are freely available to everyone with an internet connection.

We have seen a shift from simple web page browsing for information to users wanting to contribute, from standard knowledge management to conversational knowledge management, from cooperation to collaboration, and from workgroup platforms to wikis, blogs, discussions, rss feeds, and more.

People no longer just want to browse your site or be marketed to – they want to enter into a conversation with you. Companies need to start realizing this. People are already talking about your product or services whether you like it or not. They're either talking about it on your site or on someone else's, so you may as well be in the driver's seat and provide them an easy and intuitive way to enter the conversation on your site where you can benefit from the interaction and take advantage of the information flow from those conversations.

Everything on the web is moving to a more social interaction. Social software can be loosely defined as software that enables human social behavior. An example of normal human social behavior is when you go to a movie and you really like it, then you go to work the next day and you tell your friends how cool the movie was – that's normal social behavior. Social software enables those kinds of conversations and behaviors online.

A great example is Netflix – movie ratings, commenting about how you liked the movie or disliked it... those are all human interactions that social software facilitates online.

That human interaction - those conversations that your customers are having with each other - is extremely valuable for you as a business to be listening to, incorporating into your strategy, and building a community around.

### What has changed?

The way that traditional media and marketing used to work has changed drastically in the past few years. Instead of fewer ads and undivided attention (via TV, magazines, and radio) by a large & diverse audience, the Internet has allowed for more ads to a targeted set of people who are paying less attention than before. People are able to filter out the stuff they don't want to see, and therefore pay more attention to the things they want to see at any time, any place, and in any format.

This has created a shift in how companies are marketing to their consumers. Brand loyalty is not enough anymore. Brand affinity is the holy grail of marketing departments. But how can you reach that level of devotion in your customer base? Instead of marketing to your customers, let your customers talk to you. Have them tell you what they want instead of you telling them what they should have.

In Richard Florida's "Rise of the Creative Class", Richard describes a new "Generation C", one that is focused on creating content, being involved in the conversation, and always being connected. No matter the demographic of your customer base, this is your new audience. Capturing the conversations from this group of consumers will bring innovative new ideas to your organization.

Communities that have been focused on media and technology are needing to shift their strategy and start focusing on the conversations and the content generated from those conversations. Amazon.com to most people is an online e-commerce company focused on selling product. However, Amazon has numerous socially driven features to capture the customer conversation: tell a friend, rate this item, customer reviews & discussions, and the ability for users to update product info and upload product images.

And it's not just about capturing these conversations, it's about allowing customers to interact with other customers and leverage the network effect. People like to be social, and Web 2.0 technologies are allowing customers to "be social" online through social networks. We're all members of various online & offline social networks. Members of each network mingle & exert influence over one another at varying levels. Have you ever asked for advice from your friends on which movie to go see, or what they thought about a particular restaurant?

Creating an environment that provides a sustainable architecture of participation provides an opportunity for you to support multiple conversations at varying levels of engagement, reaching both a target audience and their extended social network.

This white paper will provide a framework for creating these types of environments to help facilitate the conversations, as well as guidance around how to apply that content to transform your organization.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING

How do we create an environment that captures conversations? The first step is obviously to create a community, right? They're big, they're awesome and popular right now - everyone's doing it, so let's create a community for ourselves!

Not so fast. Many companies are only thinking about the technology surrounding social media. Companies hear the term social media and immediately start thinking of blogs, RSS, videos, social bookmarking, etc. In other words, they're focusing on the technology and not the strategy behind implementing the technology. Other companies are playing the "me-too game." Everyone is blogging now, so we must blog because that will be our public "voice of the company". Wrong.

It's not about the technology. It's not about having a blog, or a photo gallery, or RSS feeds on your website. It's about how you organize the environment for a healthy & thriving community and how you create goals that are focused on the people in the community - choosing technology that matches the objectives of the site and includes features people will actually use comes once other important decisions have been made.

### Goals & Objectives

- ▶ An objective cannot simply be "to have a community". So, let's throw that away and honestly ask:
  - ▶ "Why are we doing this?"
  - ▶ "Why do we want people to come to this site?"
  - ▶ "What are we trying to achieve?"

Focus first on why the community should exist for those coming to visit it. What is the purpose for them to come to your community? What will drive them there, and why will they be willing to interact with others on your site instead of any other site?

If you can make it intuitive for visitors to your site to understand why they're there, and what value they'll get out of staying there, you'll have a better foundation for building an active and successful community.

From a corporate perspective, the goals & benefits of an online community could include:

- ▶ Understanding buyer's needs & issues
- ▶ Product improvement & innovation
- ▶ Improving customer relations
- ▶ Connecting customers with each other
- ▶ Building reputation as a thought leader.

### People & Profile

Most strategies fail because companies have misjudged their people (or they're out of the equation altogether).

Let's take a step back and make sure we're clear on why people are coming to the site, and what they'll get out of the experience that will incent them to return instead of going elsewhere.

- ▶ Even if you already have a community presence, or a growing/successful community, it's always good to take a step back from time to time and re-evaluate these principles:
  - ▶ Are we still targeting the right people?
  - ▶ Are we still meeting our objectives?

Its not too late make some changes to get back on track.

One measure we use is the Social Technographic profile that comes from a Forrester Research report. It helps classify the types of visitors that come to your site. It's a ladder of participation, meaning that users who visit your site will fall in one or more of these categories.

- ▶ **Inactives:** Haven't been there for at least a month. It is wise to understand why they aren't visiting.
- ▶ **Spectators:** Looking around... browsers... lurkers – what type of info are they looking at, how long are they spending on your site? Valuable information can be found from this group. Watch spectator behavior to identify areas on your site that are popular, but also that might not be converting lurkers into participants.

- ▶ **Joiners:** Adding the connections, adding buddies, doing the whole social networking thing but not contributing a significant amount of content.
- ▶ **Collectors:** Tagging, social bookmarking – who are they looking at, and what kinds of content are they indicating is valuable?
- ▶ **Critics:** Leave comments, rate content, generate feedback (both good and bad). Participation and response to content is high.
- ▶ **Creators:** Uploading photos & videos, writing blog posts, asking questions, contributing to or creating wiki content.

It's important to know where your current users/customers stand on this ladder of participation, as that will help you identify strategies for your particular business model and site goals.

Depending on your target audience, there will be different levels of participation and percentages will vary across the board depending on age groups. You have your GenY'ers who are enthusiastic about creating content, vs Younger Boomers in their 40-50s with low content creation activities.

One of our clients was designing an online cancer community. Their largest demographic is 40-50 year olds who are dealing with and surviving cancer. Their second largest demographic is the younger crowd of GenXer's who have just recently been diagnosed with cancer. By examining the social technographic profile of these two target audiences, we determined their largest demographic was actually not big on participation, but based on their original design plan the success of their community hinged on the people who would not be apt to share their stories.

By targeting the site and messaging to the group who were more apt to participate – the GenXer's -this company was able to design a community that engaged the users most likely and willing to create content. By getting them involved early, they would set the participation activities, determine the types of info they would be sharing, and identify value for other users' participation.

This is just one example of how the direction of the community is contingent on the people who are going to participate the most, and who determine the direction of the site. Make sure that your site goals match the participation levels of the users who will be most likely to be active on your site – especially if your site is in a pilot stage.

You'll probably have a combination of social technographic percentages, but it's good to understand who is coming and why, so that you can cater your site to their behaviors.

## Relationships & Engagement

In "Groundswell", Charline Li and Josh Bernoff (Forrester analysts) identify 5 different types of community engagement models. We highly recommend reading Groundswell thoroughly to determine what engagement model will work best for your community's goals and objectives. Note that there will most likely be one primary engagement model that stands out and one or two secondary engagement models that also fit.

**Listening:** "For research and to better understand your customers." Groundswell states that this engagement model is best suited for companies that are seeking customers' insights for use in marketing and development. We've typically seen that this type of engagement by companies is more of a "hands-off" approach: here's the community and we're just providing a place for you to participate. In some cases there may be a set of free services that encourage members to participate, but the company is not directly involved with the conversation.

**Talking:** "To spread messages about your company". In this engagement model, the company is involved in the conversation, not just an organization behind the glass mirror - helping people understand that your company has real people who care and acknowledge feedback from their customers. This engagement model helps extend current digital marketing initiatives to a more conversational model.

**Energizing:** "Supercharging the power of word of mouth". You're there to provide tools for users to take your message and promote it to the rest of the Internet.

**Supporting:** "Help your customers support each other". This type of engagement model focuses on peer-to-peer support, where users help each other and you help as well. Bank of America's Small Business Online Community is an example of a supporting community, where their main goals were simply to provide education and expertise for small business owners, establish their reputation as a trusted partner, and give their visitors a place to ask questions and learn how to improve their business. From a technical support perspective, Apple's support community is a great example of users aiding other users in solving problems.

**Embracing:** “Integrating your customers into the way your business works, including using their help to design your product”. This represents a true mentality of “opening the door to your organization” and a willingness to alter your products or services based on feedback from your members, while giving them the power to impact your priorities and company direction. A great example of an Embracing community is Apple’s discussion forum for the iPhone and iPod – Apple improved the screen and casing material quality to reduce scratching, largely based on the feedback they collected from their support site.

Once you have selected the primary & secondary engagement models, you need to consider how you want the relationship with your audience to evolve. You already have some form of relationship with your customers, partners, developers, influencers, etc. Identify how an online community is going to help change that relationship.

Some questions to ask yourself to help clarify the focus on relationships are:

- ▶ **Participation:** How are you participating in conversations with your customers right now? What types of contributions are you encouraging from your customers right now?
- ▶ **Openness:** How open are you to feedback, comments and suggestions from your customers and partners?
- ▶ **Conversations:** How are you conversing with your customers right now? Are your marketing efforts to date still focused on traditional broadcast methods? How open are you to a two-way conversation?
- ▶ **Community:** How involved are your customers in other communities? What conversations are they having there? Are you a part of those conversations?
- ▶ **Connectedness:** How are you connected to your customers now? Are they bookmarking your content?

## Community Characteristics & Technology

Unfortunately, many companies start building a community with a focus on technology first. Instead, we recommend focusing on the characteristics of the community that will add the most value:

- ▶ **Identity** - uniquely identifying people in the system
- ▶ **Presence** - knowing who is online, available or otherwise nearby
- ▶ **Relationships** - describing how two users in the system are related
- ▶ **Conversations** - talking to other people through the community
- ▶ **Groups** - forming communities of interest
- ▶ **Reputation** - knowing the status of other people in the system
- ▶ **Sharing** - sharing things that are meaningful to participants (like photos or videos)
- ▶ **Awareness** - know who has similar interests/tastes/content and activity

Pick the top 3 community characteristics, and focus on them over the others. The top 3 may be different for each organization.

Here are some examples of existing communities and the characteristics of each - this may help you identify the top characteristics for your community.

**Facebook:** Identity - personal homepage/profile ratings and status levels help identify top members and gives them their specific identity.

**Nike Running:** Conversations and Groups – identity and sharing are downplayed, but the group participation is huge and the conversations flourish around running challenges.

**Small Business Online Community:** Conversations and Identity - focusing on the conversations between small business owners and offering them rich profiles and the ability to post success stories to escalate their status within the community.

**MyCancerHub:** Primary: Sharing and Conversations. Secondary: Identity, and Relationships: “I need help and to know that I’m not alone. But also, I need to figure this out, share my story, and learn from others how to survive”.

Once you have identified the top characteristics and planned your community around them, your users need to understand

that these characteristics are important for them to use. If the main focus of your community is about conversations, but the relationships (social networking) feature is plastered all over the site, then the user will be confused about what they should do. Ensuring that the content and actions performed by the user are mapped to your community objectives will also help your community grow and thrive.

By this point you are probably asking, “So when do I get to the technology? The forums, blogs, RSS, social networking, etc.?” At this point you can start thinking about it, but do so in the context of the primary characteristics listed above and the overall community objectives, with a focus on leveraging the right tools for the type of community you are creating.

Common community types include:

- ▶ **Service & Support Community.** This type of community is geared toward helping members find answers to their questions and solutions to their problems, typically regarding your organization’s products and services.
  - ▶ **Developer/Partner Community.** Part service and support, part community of practice, developer and partner communities are built around members helping each other with technical and business issues.
  - ▶ **Affinity/Loyalty Community** (Community of Interest). These are communities based on the personal and professional interests of individuals. Fan, hobbyist, and enthusiast communities are examples, where the latest info can be shared among people with common passions.
  - ▶ **Professional-Peer Community** (Community of Practice). Built around a specific topic, industry, or discipline, professional-peer communities (also known as communities of practice) focus on learning, sharing, and networking. They share a common vocabulary and set of understandings.
  - ▶ **Private Community.** This type of community is often described as a 24/7 focus group. Private communities are typically small (usually with fewer than 500 people) and consist of members who have been recruited to provide regular feedback on products, services and ideas for marketing, product development, and R&D groups.
- ▶ **Service & Support:** Discussions (Q&A), Living docs (wikis), Reputation/Rewards, Uploading Docs
  - ▶ **Developer/Partner:** Reputation/Rewards, Announcements, Ratings, Living Documents, Uploading docs, Rich media (training), Friending
  - ▶ **Affinity / Loyalty:** Blogs, Rich Media Support, Discussions, Reputation/Rewards, Ratings, Announcements
  - ▶ **Professional-Peer:** Friending, Member-generated groups, Rich Media support, RSS feeds, Reputation/Rewards
  - ▶ **Private Community:** Discussion threads, Blogs, Polling, Ratings, Live event chat, Living docs (wikis), Uploading docs

At the end of this whitepaper, we offer an analysis of several live communities and a description of the type of community, engagement model(s), and community characteristics that were deployed.

## WHAT’S NEXT

At this point, you should have a solid idea of the type of online community that best suits your company’s goals and objectives. Remember, do not focus on the technology first. Ensure you are targeting the right audience. Validate what type of community will add the most value to your organization and ensure you are ready for the levels of engagement that is required. By focusing on the right characteristics of community, your community will have a better chance of thriving.

But now what? We’ve got a great blueprint, but how do we start translating it into an actual design and implementation? The next white paper in this series provides a walkthrough of Jive Software’s community design workbook that is used in our customer implementations. We focus on drilling deeper into understanding the audience profile and activities, and explore content management strategies, social interaction guidelines, and community growth plans.

Below are community types and the technology this is commonly used to support the objectives of the site:

## APPENDIX - EXAMPLE COMMUNITIES

### Nike Running / NikePlus



**Description:** NikePlus is an only community focused on allowing Nike+ product owners to discuss their experience with the product, challenge other runners, and organize running events.

**Type of Community:** *Affinity / Loyalty* - provides a platform for users with similar interests to connect with each other

**Engagement Model:** Primary - *Energizing*. Secondary - *Embracing & Listening*

**Community Characteristics:** *Conversations, Groups, and Awareness*

**Interesting Facts:** In a one year period, 500,000 members have signed up, 50,000,000 miles have been ran by members, 500,000 challenges created, and over 200,000 unique product ideas have been captured. Community members have more freedom to express themselves. "40% of Nike+ community members become converts to the company's shoes" - Trevor Edwards, VP of Global Brand Management.

## CNN iReport

The screenshot displays the CNN iReport website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'iReports', 'iReporters', and 'Blog' links, along with a search bar and a 'LOGIN' button. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into several sections:

- Top Left:** A blue banner with the 'iReport beta' logo and the tagline 'Unedited. Unfiltered. News.' It includes a 'Feedback' link and a 'SEARCH' button.
- Top Center:** An orange 'UPLOAD NOW!' button and a login form with fields for 'E-mail:' and 'Password:', a 'Remember me' checkbox, and a 'LOGIN' button. Below the form are links for 'Reset password' and 'Not a member? Register »'.
- Left Column:**
  - A world map graphic showing '124,743 iReports worldwide' and '682 on CNN last month'. Below it is a link: 'Coming Soon! See where people are reporting from ...'.
  - An 'Explore' section with a '- Tags' list including: beijing\_olympics, china, computers, economy, election08, flooding, gas\_prices, history, ireport\_for\_cnn, mccain, obama, olympics, opinion, politics, second\_amendment, situation\_room, technology, travel, weather, wildfires. A 'more »' link is at the bottom.
  - A '+ People' section.
  - An 'Appeared on CNN' section with the text 'iReports used in CNN's news coverage' and a video thumbnail of a bus fire. Below the video is the title 'Bus Fire Outside Union Station »' and the post information: 'Posted by: amatofilms Jun 27, 2008'.
- Right Column:**
  - A 'Fun on Friday: Your computing stories' section with a 'close' button. The text reads: 'Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates is entering retirement, signaling the end of an era for the corporation that brought us the Windows operating system. We want to see and hear your stories of floppy disks, MS-DOS and the old machines you've had. Share photos and video of the evolving state of home computing.'
  - A 'Newsiest Now' section with a 'WHAT'S THIS?' icon and a grid of 12 small image thumbnails.
  - A 'Fresh iReports' section with the text 'latest and greatest community news // more »'. Below this is a navigation bar with tabs: 'Latest', 'Highest Rated', 'Most Viewed', 'Most Commented', 'Most Shared', 'On CNN', and 'Newsiest (WHAT'S THIS?)'.
  - Two featured reports:
    - 'NEWS They are Afraid to Print or Talk about on TV »' by 'midnightlady', posted 2 minutes ago. It has 0 comments and 0 ratings. The text includes: 'United States Everywhere, Ohio', 'Back to Story - Help !http://l.yimg.com/us.yimg.com/i/us/nws/p/prweb\_new.gif!Covert Torture, Surveillance Jeopardizes the Freedom of...'
    - 'Puppet Look Alike »' by 'grandlake1', posted 6 minutes ago. It has 0 comments and 0 ratings. The text includes: 'Rockford, Ohio', 'I caught this ventriloquist act at a local park, it seems art does mimic life...'

**Description:** CNN iReport put the reporting of the news into the hands of the user. The iReport.com community tells the stories we're not used to seeing. And the most compelling, important, and urgent ones may get seen on CNN.

**Type of Community:** **Affinity / Loyalty** - provides a platform for users with similar interests to connect with each other

**Engagement Model:** Primary - **Embracing**. Secondary - **Energizing & Listening**

**Community Characteristics:** **Sharing** and **Identity**

**Interesting Facts:** The beta community launched in February 2008. Since then 124,743 iReports posted to date, 3,055 user generated video clips were used on CNN news reports, and 54,915 members have registered.

## My Cancer Hub

**My Cancer Hub**  
information • research • support

Welcome, Guest | [Login](#) | [Register](#)

### MyCancerHub Community

Welcome to MyCancerHub

**Learn...** Ask Questions, discuss topics, research information.

**Share...** Tell your story; invite your family and friends.

**Connect...** Meet others like you; give and receive emotional support.

**Get Started**  
Share your story and connect with others like you in our community.  
[» Learn more.](#)  
[» Join My Cancer Hub](#)

**Communities**

- [Just Diagnosed](#)
- [Survive and Thrive](#)
- [Caregivers](#)
- [Local Resource Guide](#)
- [Help and Guidelines](#)

**Share!**  
Tell your story.  
Keep your family and friends informed.  
Express yourself.  
[» Create Your Blog](#)

**We're There When You Need Us**  
If you are a UnitedHealthcare member and you or a loved one has been diagnosed with cancer, you may be eligible for the Cancer Support Program, your single

**Find Cancer Information**

- [General Cancer](#)
- [Lung Cancer](#)
- [Skin Cancer](#)
- [Breast Cancer](#)
- [Ovarian Cancer](#)
- [Pancreatic Cancer](#)

*My journey begins...*

*I will overcome.*

*Together, we can make it.*

**I have been recently diagnosed with cancer.**  
Research your condition. Find answers to your questions. Find answers to your questions. Seek advice from others.  
[» click here](#)

**I am living with cancer.**  
Share your story. Connect with others. Give and Receive Support.  
[» click here](#)

**I am a caregiver.**  
Give and receive support for your role as a caregiver.  
[» click here](#)

**Description:** My Cancer Hub is an online community focused around people who have been recently diagnosed with cancer, those who are coping and surviving cancer, and those who are caring for those have cancer.

**Type of Community:** Professional - Peer

**Engagement Model:** Primary - Supporting. Secondary - Energizing & Embracing

**Community Characteristics:** Sharing and Conversations

## Intel OpenPort

**Open Port**  
Gain access, share ideas, and discuss topics with leaders in the IT community

Home > Open Port

**Zones**

- IT@Intel
- Intel@ vPro™ Expert Center
  - Activation
  - Ask An Expert
  - Microsoft vPro Manageability
  - SMB Talk
- The Server Room
  - Ask An Expert
- Emerging Compute Model Forum
- General Community
  - Whats Your IT Utopia
  - Archives
  - Member Blogs
  - International Zone
  - IT Playground
- Embedded Forum
  - Small Form Factors
  - Multicore
  - ATCA/uTCA
- Intel Premier IT Professional Zone

**Cool Tools**

Listen Live!  
blogtalkradio

**Announcements**

**Groundswell Awards!**  
Hey, you've helped make Open Port a success and thanks to you it is nominated for a Groundswell Award. Share your voice on Open Port to help it win.

Vote for Open Port

**Browse All:** | Blogs | Discussions | Resources  
**Site resources:** Site User Guide | Support Info | Code of Conduct.  
Want to know what you can do & where? See simple site guide

**Latest Blog Posts**

**Portland Event - MUST ATTEND event**  
Posted at Sep 11, 2008 11:33:01 AM by josh.hilliker in Intel Premier IT Professional Zone

I'm out in Portland at the local Intel Premier IT Professionals. Dave Buchholz is presenting out on Client virtualization, in which he odes a great job of explaining what Intel IT is doing, what does it mean for the IT environment.

Continue Reading >>  
Permalink | Comments (0)

**Looking for an Internship with Intel?**  
Posted at Sep 10, 2008 3:05:30 PM by josh.hilliker in General Community

Hi all,

**Recent Discussions**

bill.chen@intel.com wrote:  
**Re: SCCM OOB console issue on remote SCCM console in Microsoft vPro Manageability**

ksanjeev wrote:  
**Product vs Service - Indian Used Car Industry in General Community**

bill.chen@intel.com wrote:  
**SCCM OOB console issue on remote SCCM console in Microsoft vPro Manageability**

jennifer jin wrote:  
**Re: SCCM OOB console issue on remote SCCM console in Microsoft vPro Manageability**

bill.chen@intel.com wrote:  
**Re: Provisioning in Microsoft vPro Manageability**

**Recent Resources**

- Energy
- My Forrester Groundswell awards submission page
- ROI Analysis: Reducing 856,000 Pounds of CO2 Emissions through Remote Services and Off-Hours Power Management

**Description:** Intel's web marketing organization recognized the trend of customer generated conversations – and how customers preferred to have conversations with others regarding information on Intel's products – so they launched the Open Port site to support their business customers and technical community.

**Type of Community:** Professional-Peer

**Engagement Model:** Primary - Supporting & Energizing. Secondary - Embracing & Listening

**Community Characteristics:** Sharing, Identity and Conversations

**Interesting Fact:** Intel supports only 25% of the dialogue, with the community supporting 75%. Since January 2008, Traffic has increased 400%, Participation has increased 250%, and user registrations have grown by 600%. 75% of all traffic is organic, and Open Port outperforms similar business content on Intel.com 3 to 1.

### About Jive Software

We develop award-winning collaboration software that improves a company's productivity through open collaboration among employees, partners and customers. We're located in downtown Portland, Oregon.

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