

Community Engagement Models

In “Groundswell”, Charline Li and Josh Bernoff, from Forrester, identify 5 different type of community engagement models . We highly recommending reading Groundswell thoroughly to determine what engagement model works 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 modes.

Listening: “For research and to better understand your customers.” Groundswell states that this is best suited for companies that are seeking customers insights for us in marketing and development. We’ve typically seen that the type of engagement by companies is more of a “hands-off” approach. Here’s the community and we’re just going to provide a place for you to participate. Maybe there’s 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, you’re involved in the conversation, not just a company behind the glass mirror. Helping people understand that your company has real people who care, and isn’t just a building. 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 is example of a supporting community, where their main goal was simply to provide education and expertise for small business owners, as a reputation builder, and giving 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 “opening the door to your organization” and being willing to alter your products or services based on feedback from your members, and giving them the power to impact your

priorities and direction. Apple discussions forum for the iPhone and iPod – they improved the screen and casing material quality to reduce scratching, largely based on the feedback they got from their support site.