



The Maturing Community: Growing the Plateau

Mike Rowland
President
Impact Interactions
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A little about us before we start:

Clients include:



Other organizations we've helped* with their online communities:



Entering its seventh year, our **Online Community Executives' Roundtable** hosts members from organizations such as Apple, Cisco, Consumer Reports, HP, Mercury, Cadence Design, RightNow Technologies, WebMD, and our clients as well as researchers, academic leaders, and strategic partners to discuss current online issues

*Some engagement through Participate Systems

From Growth to Plateau to Growth

- Most well managed online communities plateau at some point
 - Growth rate of new members, user generated content, and repeat visitor percentages begin to slow and flatten
 - The question is what can be done to prevent it or to return to growth?



To



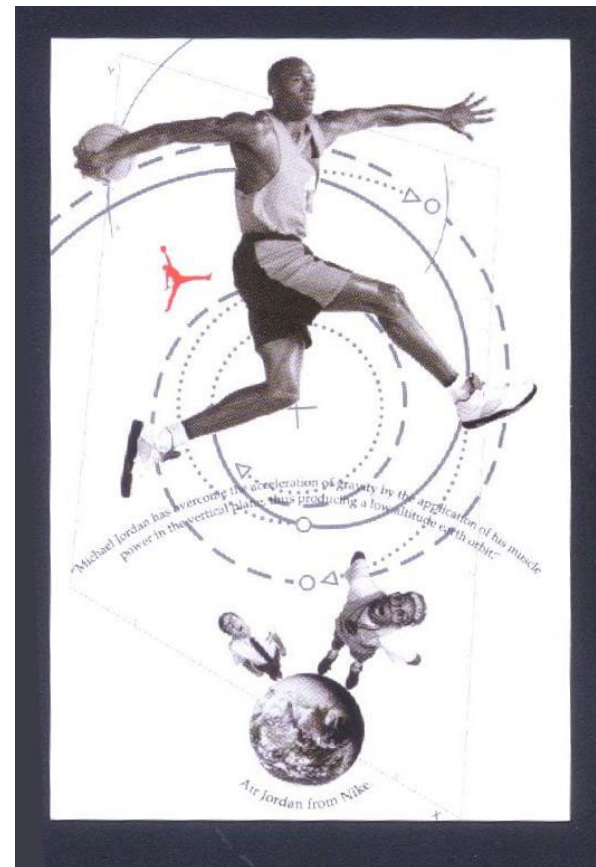
“What do you mean that was my responsibility? I thought it was yours.”

- **Problem #1 – Too many chefs, not enough waiters**
 - Mostly in large organizations that have layers of managers over a community
 - Multiple community managers vs. one
 - I.T. vs. community technology
- **What works**
 - Dual Control model – one point of control for technical issues, one for everything else
 - Single Control model – one point of control for everything with technical team separate from IT
 - Either way, there must be strong communication between team members and a rock solid escalation policy that works



“It’s the shoes, Mike!” “No Mars, it’s not.”

- **Problem #2 – Focusing on the tools, not the people**
 - How well do you know the members of your site?
 - Tools facilitate conversation, people make the community run
- **What works**
 - Private dialog with top members online and offline
 - Contact registered members who have not visited the site in the past 3 months
 - Quick survey on member use of the community and their needs now versus when they last visited
 - Increase your member recognition plan to really show new members what this community can do



“Extra! Extra! Read All About It!”

- **Problem #3 – Slowing down the outreach effort**
 - Too often community managers get complacent relying on their branded newsletters
 - Don't bury refer a colleague links
- **What works**
 - Find complimentary audience visiting your site to target
 - Dynamic HTML links on other pages of interest to your members
 - Referral contest for members to drive new visitors from their companies and their peer group
 - Press releases of accomplishments featuring community members
 - RSS Feeds from content on your site
 - *Stay away from rental lists if you can!*



KISS vs. Complex Offerings

- **Problem #4 – Using outdated tools or offering too many tools**
 - Technology vs. User Needs .. Don't offer it because it's cool, offer it because it will help your members
 - It is time to move away from or to upgrade the message boards?
 - How do you differentiate the use of blogs, wikis, and message boards from each other? What is the value of each to your members? (AND DO THEY KNOW IT?)
- **What works**
 - Depends upon your audience (See Problem #1) – MEASURE!
 - *A great search engine on your site*





Questions



Contact Us

- Mike Rowland, President of Impact Interactions

MRowland@ImpactInteractions.com
(410) 604-3304

- Personal Background: Prior to starting Impact Interactions, Mike Rowland helped build Participate Systems into one of the pioneers in the online community world. In his role, Mike was responsible for launching, running, and measuring the ROI for the majority of Participate's clients. An entrepreneur in the classic sense of the word, he has been involved in the start-up of several companies. With a strong background in financial analysis and marketing, Mike brings a disciplined, focused approach to our engagements. Mike holds an MBA in Marketing and Consumer Behavior and a BA in Economics and Latin American studies.

For more information visit our website ImpactInteractions.com