

8 1/2 STEPS TO MARKET YOUR COMMUNITY SITE





1 | Give Your Community a Face (Or a Tail)

Your community site is an extension of your online presence. Put thoughtful time into planning the name, look/feel, design and logo. Just like your organization has a Brand Book to represent its style, your community site needs a Brand Book for the same reason. Brand Books come in all shapes and sizes. You will hear them called a variety of names: Brand Book, Brand Guidelines, Style Guide, and Identity Guidelines, just to call out a few. Create a Brand Book that contains your logo application, color palette, style and typography. Use the Brand Book to establish and maintain your brand identity – both internally and externally.

Introduce a community site mascot. There's nothing like a mascot to strengthen a brand. The mascot adds personality where there is little. It adds character and charm and most importantly, recognition and memorability. A mascot is a branding element that can help people better engage with your organization. Create a community site mascot or use the one you have to personify your community in a new, engaging way. Include a profile page in your community for your new addition to demonstrate the feature-functionally and allow members to directly connect. Not sure of a name? Why not crowd source the name and create a member-driven naming campaign around it.

Example: The Missouri Association of REALTORS (MAR)'s Rupert
thelanding.net/Home/AboutRupert





2 | Prepare a Strategic Marketing Plan

Write a Strategic Marketing Plan for your community site. You can start with the one you have for your organization and customize accordingly. Make a list of all your current communication channels and brainstorm new content ideas. It's important to include an editorial calendar and get all of your departments involved. Communications should cross-promote. Remember to set realistic goals and plan for the entire calendar year, including pre and post launch. And while having a well-crafted plan for your community site is essential, make sure to also integrate your community into your overall marketing strategy. Find ways to incorporate messaging and content from your community site into pre-existing marketing.

Example: The American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordination (AANAC)
AANACConnect Post-Launch Tactical Plan Q2

| | A | B | C | D | E | F |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| 1 | | AANACConnect Post-Launch Tactical Plan Q2 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | | Task | Audience | Due Date | Lead | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 5 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Engagement Strategies: | | | | |
| 6 | | Include AANACConnect in the 12-month email series for new members | New members | | Shannon | |
| 7 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Launch mobile app and promote | Members | | Heather/Shannon | |
| 8 | | Implement ribbons for members | Members | | | |
| 9 | | Giveaway or contest - TBD and done quarterly | Members | | Shannon | |
| 10 | | New "P.S." for AANAC staff emails | Members/Non-members | Ongoing/Monthly | Shannon | |
| 11 | | Hire additional experts for other communities | Members | | Heather/Judi? | |
| 12 | | | | | | |
| 13 | | Cross-promotion: | | | | |
| 14 | | RSS Graffiti set up on Facebook to pull news over | Non-members | May | Shannon/Tony | |
| 15 | | Include tips and tricks in newsletter and KYI Emails | Members | Ongoing | Tony | |
| 16 | | Post all applicable Connect announcements on LinkedIn and Facebook | Non-members | Ongoing | Shannon | |
| 17 | | Continue communications via all channels: marketing, print, Post links when we are featured elsewhere: Provider, McKnights, etc. | Members | Ongoing | Tony | |
| 18 | | Support and promote our sponsors on Connect | Members/Non-members | Ongoing | Tony | |
| 19 | | | Members | Ongoing | Erin/Erica | |
| 20 | | | | | | |
| 21 | | Connect Content: | | | | |
| 22 | | Checking content in specialty communities - MDS Connection, DON/ADON, etc. - and responding appropriately | Members | Ongoing | Team | |
| 23 | | Checking content in the general community - LTC Network - and responding appropriately | Members | Ongoing | Shannon | |
| 24 | | | | | | |

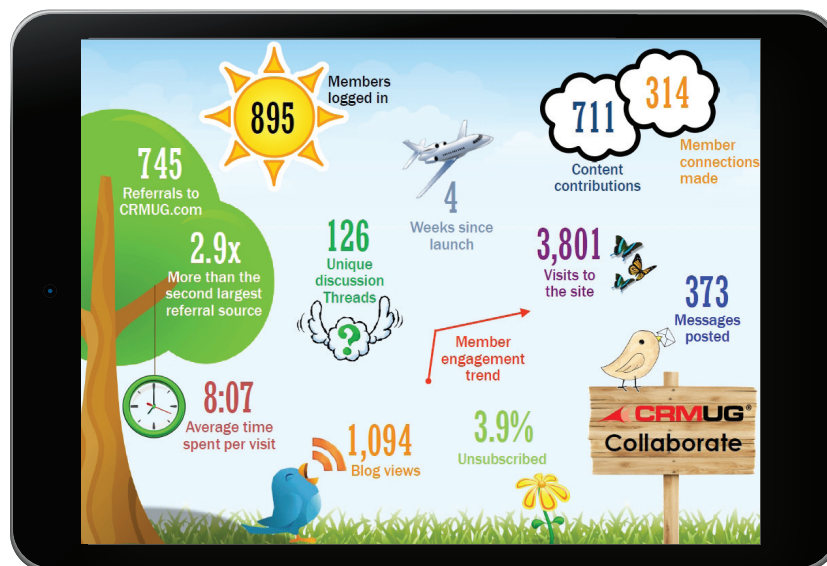
3 | Add Addictive Content to Your Marketing

Infographics are addictive because there is a demand for data that is quickly transferable, coherent and visually interesting. Infographics are visual representations of data or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly. Infographics are not just a current trend; they're a new way to present information, tell a story and produce viral content. In fact, 90% of the information that comes to the brain is visual. Moreover, 65% of the population are visual learners. There is a major difference in the way our brain processes images and text. Due to infographics attractiveness the capacity for them to be shared on social networks and become viral is much higher than ordinary text content.

Begin by building an infographic that is made of engagement data from your community site. Infographics can be designed to be built upon over time, so start with a small segment of data. Really think about the story you want to tell. Use reporting tools to record and benchmark progress over time. Consider using content like real images, logos, testimonials and video clips. Not sure where to start? Be inspired by examples; we posted a few favorites on a Pinterest board (www.pinterest.com/higherlogic/cool-infographics). Next post your infographics on your community, but also splice them up to use in multiple marketing channels – online ads, pull the data out for an article, a series of blog posts or tweets. Promote and share infographics just as you would traditional content.

Example: The Microsoft Dynamics CRM User Group (CRMUG®)

[CRMUG Conference Infographic](#) | crmug.com



BONUS: There are free online tools that make creating infographics easier such as [Piktochart](#), [Infogr.am](#) and [Easel.ly](#).



4 | Use Advertising Space Creatively

Your community site is at the magical place where you have established popularity, traffic, loyalty and a community of evangelists because your site contains a wealth of information and resources your users want to access. So use the valuable real estate on the top, bottom and gutters of your homepage and interior pages as a marketing channel to communicate with your users. Now, what to say...

Use this space to:

- Highlight users – try featuring your most active user.
- Advertise a book or publication.
- Create an infographic ad series and feature big data points.
- Remind users to renew their membership.
- Introduce your mobile app and link to download.
- Market your annual conference.
- Promote the most active discussion group.
- Announce your new blog and ask for feedback.
- Ask for new volunteers or fill committee positions.
- Post a survey. What better way to learn about your users, just ask!
- Publicize contests, giveaways or discounts.

Bookmark The IAB Ad Unit Guidelines (www.iab.net/ad_unit) – and use them for creating, planning, buying and selling of interactive marketing and advertising. Today over 80% of display ads sold follow IAB standards. Keep artwork consistent with the IAB standards and it will keep managing advertising in your community site simple.

Example: The Produce Marketing Association (PMA)
xchange.pma.com





5 | Go Mobile

Mobile, mobile, mobile – we know you know, but we bring it up again because you must consider mobile when communicating with your members across all mediums. You're most likely testing your e-mail marketing for mobile, but are you testing your community? What does your community site look like on a mobile device or tablet? What does your content look like on a mobile device or tablet? You want to make sure your community and content look great across mobile devices and various screen sizes, ultimately providing members with a better mobile user experience.

Next, make sure members know they have mobile options. Start by dedicating a webpage exclusively to communicate the value of mobile membership on your community site. This will be your home base and the URL for all future mobile marketing promotions. Answer the question: why should a member download the app? And make the details simple. Provide a Q&A with frequently asked questions. Use screenshots that correspond to all mobile devices. Create a quick tutorial video. Make sure to establish a contact for members to connect with for help. Lastly, try holding a monthly or quarterly webinar session as an open forum for mobile discussion, tips or troubleshooting.

Example: The New Jersey Society of CPA's (NJSCPA)

[NJSCPA Connect Mobile](#) | connect.njscpa.org/mobile





6 | Create a Microsite for Your Annual Conference

Do you need to create an annual meeting website? Why not create a microsite for your event through your community site? As marketers we know this can be a pain point. A microsite is an extension of your community site. With the right tools, creating a microsite is simple and easy to control brand/messaging. While adhering to the brand guidelines of your community (or not if you choose), you can designate a microsite for your annual conference that both members and non-member attendees can utilize before, during and after the event.

Use your annual conference microsite to:

- Generate buzz about the event and get more registrants or sponsorships.
- Communicate with members about the event and as new announcements come up.
- Create a dedicated upload path for speakers to upload their PowerPoint presentations.
- Add a content item that allows attendees to browse conference materials prior to the event.
- Crowd-source community site swag. Do your members want t-shirts, ribbons or bags?
- Ask keynote speakers to blog about their sessions prior to the conference and engage with registrants.
- Embed a Twitter widget for the conference feed on your site's homepage using your event hashtag.
- Promote your event mobile app.
- Host a member-led session about your community. Perhaps it's a round table discussion on why they use the community site every day.
- Announce community awards. You can create a separate reception for this or in conjunction with your already scheduled ceremony.
- Provide a networking platform to registrants before and after the event.
- Host a place for first time attendees to connect. You could even set them up with a mentor match before they arrive.

Example: The Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA)

[AUPHA's Microsite](#) | annualmeeting.aupha.org/AnnualMeeting



7 | Say Cheese...

And smile! We'll ask your members to. Hire a licensed photographer and set up an area at your next annual conference or meeting to snap professional headshots of your members. Next, invite them to stop by a table or booth set up specifically for your community site. Offer to help them upload a digital copy directly to their profile page and be sure to answer any usability questions on their mind. Provide a takeaway you can only get in the space – branded community site t-shirts are always fun!

Example: The International Franchise Association (IFA)
fransocial.franchise.org

Example: The Water Environment Foundation (WEF)
wefcom.wef.org



8 | Give Away Free Stuff

Yes, you read that correctly. Free stuff still works. A quick way to spread word about your robust community is to attract attention with a friendly competition. A contest will generate awareness and interest while also stimulating engagement. Link the contest to an action required in the community. Create a contest page that is simple and exciting, but also easy to enter. Include an attention-grabbing title, a photo of the prize, clear entry information including rules and a submission button.

Next, decide what players need to do to enter your contest. Here are a few ideas:

- 100% Profile Completeness – all members with 100% profile completeness
- Connection Contest – the member with the most connections at your annual meeting
- Engagement Points – the top three members with the highest number of engagement points
- Checklist – members must complete four actions in the community before they're entered to win
 - 100% profile completeness
 - Have at least 25 member connections
 - Share a resource in the knowledge bank
 - Join one discussion group and post in a conversation

Additionally, pick a prize that is meaningful, noteworthy and relevant to your organization. The prize is the most important piece of your contest. It's what will drive people to participate. Go a step further and feature the winners on your community homepage. Ask them to send in pictures with their prize for visual interest.

Example: The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)

Put a Face on it: Personalize Your Membership Experience Contest
collaborate.asaecenter.org

The screenshot shows the ASAE Collaborate website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "Events", "Contact Us", and "asaecenter.org". A search bar is also present. The main header features the "collaborate." logo and the "asae" logo with the tagline "The Center for Association Leadership". A user profile box on the right says "Welcome, Lauren" and includes links for "Profile", "Communities", and "Logout", along with a "Complete your profile" button. Below the header is a navigation menu with "Home", "My Profile", "Directory", "Communities", "Volunteer", and "Tips & Tricks". The main content area has a search bar and a "show advanced search" link. A prominent announcement is displayed: "Collaborate names first winner in Contest!" posted by Dana Anaman on June 18, 2013. The announcement includes a small ASAE logo and text congratulating Matthew D'Uva for winning a \$50 Visa Gift Card by uploading a profile picture. On the right side, there's a "Search" sidebar with a list of navigation options: Home, My Profile, Directory, Communities, Volunteer, and Tips & Tricks. At the bottom right, there's a "FIND US ON" section with social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube.



8½ | Grow Engagement by Giving Away More Free Stuff

Okay 8½ seemed stronger than 8...plus we really do have more to share.

For this ½ step, make sure to walk before you climb. Do research, network with other community managers, make a plan of action and ask members to help. Forrester Research found that over 90% of purchasing decisions begin online. Having quality and relevant content allows your members to invest in your organization, find value in their membership and encourage others to join. In addition to giving away promotional items from contests as mentioned in step 8, give away some content items at no charge. When your members discover the high quality of your content, they will be more confident in their membership and more likely to buy your next publication because they already know the great value you deliver. Could you offer an article of your monthly magazine at no subscription charge? What if you made access to your most active discussion group public? Post segments of the conversation in your e-newsletter linking back to your community site or write a blog to review the top five most active community conversations. You know what, start climbing. There's nothing to fear!

Example: The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)

Put a Face on it: Personalize Your Membership Experience Contest
collaborate.asaecenter.org

Collaborate names second winner in Contest!

By: [Dana Anaman](#), 7/22/2013 3:22:39 PM

Congratulations to our second monthly winner Beverly Babb, CAE, Chief of Operations of National Speakers Association in Mesa, AZ.

Because of her participation in the Put a Face on it: Personalize your Membership Experience Contest, Beverly has won a \$50 Visa Gift Card by uploading a profile picture in Collaborate and/or filling out her ASAE profile demographics. You can be a winner too by entering today at <http://www.asaecenter.org/contest>

[Contest Details](#)

Collaborate names first winner in Contest!

By: [Dana Anaman](#), 6/18/2013 3:19:03 PM

Congratulations to our first monthly winner Matthew D' Uva, FASAE, CAE, President and CEO of SOCAP International in Alexandria, VA.

Because of his participation in the Put a Face on it: Personalize your Membership Experience Contest, Matthew has won a \$50 Visa Gift Card by uploading a profile picture in Collaborate and/or filling out his ASAE profile demographics. You can be a winner too by entering today at asaecenter.org/contest!

[Contest Details](#)



www.higherlogic.com | 866-670-1402