



SuperFastBusiness presents

How To Engage Your Community – Part 2

Community strategist Diana Tower and
paid membership owner James Schramko
talk about community health, metrics,
member retention and more.



How To Engage Your Community – Part 2

by SuperFastBusiness



Diana Tower

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 586, How To Engage Your Community, and this is Part Two of a two-part series that I'm holding with Diana Tower. So, welcome back to the call, Diana.

Diana: Hey, James. Thanks so much for having me.

James: Well, you're back. So that's pretty good. And yeah, we had a great

discussion on Part One of this. So if you haven't listened to Part One, please go back and find [Episode 585 about How To Engage Your Community](#), where we talked back and forth, we covered a few of the different types of platforms you might consider if you have a community; we talked about the difference between a signature program with a community on the side versus a community as a product; we talked about community managers, and then we finished up talking about how emotion is important in community.

And we got some really good reactions, lots of shares, a few comments around that show. And thought we'd just continue delving into this topic, because a topic like this affects a broad catchment of people who are listening to SuperFastBusiness, because there's so many community owners in our midst, course creators and forum owners. So, Diana, it's just wonderful to have you back here sharing again.

Diana: Thank you so much. I mean, it's really great to be able to share what I know about community and really add some value to your listeners.

James: Yes. So you've got some experience in this. You mentioned how you were an active member in someone else's community and they took notice of that and they invited you to continue to share your expertise and knowledge. And you've built up somewhat of a reputation around this, and I've had some of my customers actually say, "Hey, maybe I should be speaking to Diana." So that's a nice outcome from the first podcast.

Today, we're going to get a little bit deeper into how we can sort of detect what sort of a community we have in terms of if it's healthy or not, and how we might help people get the best results from their community with onboarding and what other things we can do to basically increase the health of a community.

Why bother with a community?

So firstly, I guess it seems obvious, but why would we, as business owners, care about having a community in the first place?

Diana: This is such a good question because why are we even talking about it? Why is it important? And really the bottom line is that it actually is really good for your bottom line. So there's actually a lot of different ways that community can really add to your business. I wanted to focus on three. There's actually a lot of them, but

the three main ones that I wanted to touch on is the fact that it can increase retention for your existing customers, it's a great way to identify new revenue opportunities, and also for recruitment.

So just starting with retention. For example, for yourself, you have membership communities. It's in your interest to keep people in your membership and it's proven that it's actually easier and less expensive to keep existing customers than try to find new ones. And so if you can add a community that people just really feel a part of and they really enjoy being in, that's going to keep your existing customers in your communities. So for example, if you've got that membership community, it's going to keep them in that membership and the money is still going to be coming in.

And then also for course creators, imagine it's not, say, a membership, but there's a course, it's proven that when there's a community that's attached to it, it actually helps students complete the course so they can get results. So it really does add massive value in terms of retention and people getting results from your programs.

In terms of identifying new revenue opportunities, basically, it's like building customer research. I know for myself, community is really more about people and relationships and emotion, but like on a business side and from a strategic perspective, it's a great way to connect directly with your audience and really find out what their extra problems are. Like, maybe they're struggling with something else that's related to what you're already offering. Or maybe they need a little bit of extra support with a particular part of the process. And so that's a great way for you, as a business owner, to really identify other services, or maybe even create a whole new product. And it's all baked into your existing models, so you don't have to go outside of your community to try and figure out, what do people want? What do people need? So it's kind of built into that.

And then the last one, so we're with recruitment, that's what we touched on in the [last episode](#). So in terms of, you know, hiring people for your team or especially, like, a community manager, you can see talent in your communities. Depending on the type of community that you're offering, you've got some savvy business people that are in there. They all have their own strengths and talents and kind of perspective to potentially add to your business. And so it's a great way to really kind of step back and say, like, 'Hey, is there somebody in here that would make a great member of our team?' Or maybe somebody who's extra supportive or

empathetic or really cheering people on, maybe they would make a great community manager. And depending on what you're offering, maybe they'd be interested in joining your team or even being a contractor or something like that. So just being able to get access to really awesome people, it's curated. Especially depending on your price point, it's a great way to find talent.

And so those are probably the top three. Like I said, there's a lot of other benefits as well. Like, for example, reducing customer service costs, because people reach out in the community. It's a great way to reduce marketing costs. But I would say those top three are probably the most compelling.

James: I think large companies like Google, PayPal and Apple, they seem to steer people towards community solutions. Especially Google, actually. They get customers helping each other. I often think maybe it's the blind leading the blind.

Diana: You have to be careful, yeah.

James: Some of them have been, you know, now getting on the phone and actually being approachable, which is fantastic in this this day and age.

I really support your points there in terms of retention. You're right. In terms of bottom line, community is pretty much my entire business income. And I much prefer to spend time with the same people solving their problems and building that relationship stronger and stronger than having to go and find new people at the start of every month.

And when you look out there on the online landscape, it seems that is almost an obsession – people talking about funnels and traffic and conversions, and it's been this obsession of just trying to find new ways to get customers. When the whole time, if they could create a community and continue to serve that community, especially if they put it on a recurring income business model, which I would recommend, it can be an amazing business, a very nourishing business.

And you're right about product development. I find with the live monthly training, I'm creating a new product each month and the deadline and expectation of that is really great for my ability to channel ideas into form. I get the idea, I turn it into a slide deck, I gather research and intelligence and bring it together, and then I share often a documented case study of something that's worked really well for my own business or a business of a customer of mine.

That drive helps produce. And I'm getting paid really well for it, too. That's the other point. It's like I've basically arranged a paid contract to deliver training forever, between now and forever, as long as I'm willing to do it or enjoy it. And I'm committed up to 12 months, because that's the longest subscription I'll accept. So I've got a 12-month commitment to deliver this, until I decide it's no longer exciting for me.

More of the benefits

That really sort of leads to another point, which maybe didn't come in there, but the ability for a business owner to grow and learn is astronomical. I've actually worked out that I'm doing around 500 posts a month, on average. I've done, gosh, I've done a lot of posts each year, 6000 posts a year in my own community. And I have to say that I learn more than anybody else. Because getting that level of customer research and making my brain think of solutions and answers, it just takes you to the sharpest possible steel. You get so strong.

And then the flip side is, you feel really good when a customer gets a result. I've had, I think, about 300 likes a month to my answers. So somewhere around 10 times a day, someone's saying thank you for me being able to help them. And it's just such a pleasure to be able to deliver a result. So I think it actually contributes to your feeling of self-worth. And to know that you're appreciated and you have your value to the community. By having a community is a great benefit that maybe not everyone thinks about initially. They're thinking about money. But from a creative perspective, it's good to be acknowledged for your work.

Diana: That's such a good point. And I think what I love about that as well is that you're creating content. It's almost like you're creating content for specific people. And so it's going to resonate A, with that person that you're making it for, but then all of the people probably that are in similar situations. So it's not just your kind of trying to hypothesize on, 'OK, I think this is probably going to help a lot of people. Let's make this.' It's actually, 'John, he needs this and so I'm going to help with that specific situation.' And you know, it applies to other people.

James: You're so right. I mean, here's the thing, this is really amazing. I've been to really high-level masterminds, and one of the saddest things that I've ever seen is a bunch of these guys sitting around and they start with this: "I've got a mortgage to

pay,” or “I need an upgrade in my vehicle, so I need to make some money. What’s hot? What can I sell right now? What are people lapping up?” Right? It starts with their own need, and then it moves to what’s hot, what’s in the market? So that’s what they’re going to flog – what product they’re going to sell. And they use derogatory terms for buyers, like punters and mugs or noobs or whatever.

Diana: Really? Oh, god.

James: And then they go into sort of doing, they might do an avatar model, which is the theoretical customer. They might stitch together an avatar, and often it will be to backfill whatever latest, greatest thing’s hot at the moment. That’s so sad, whereas what we’re talking about with a community is, you’re right, we’re dealing with an actual human.

I’d say, even the first product that I made good money from online was me sharing a solution that I found, that solved my own problem, that was software to build a website. And I was so excited that I’d actually solved my problem and that I could share this with others. And other people were excited about it, and they purchased and I got a commission for that, but I was always serving someone else’s problem. And then from there, everything that I’ve created is solving my own problem or a customer’s problem.

And when you go to meetups, face-to-face meetups, when you answer thousands upon thousands of questions, and when you get to know your customer inside and out, better than they know themselves, actually, because I’ve got this outside perspective, I can see everything, which often they’re hiding from themselves. They say things like, “Oh, I can’t do this,” or “That’s not the type of person I am.” And I say, “That’s ridiculous. Of course you can.” Or they say, “I can only deliver my workshop to 15 people.” And I say, “Why not 50?” Or they say, “I can only sell my product for a one-time fee.” And I say, “Why not recurring?” And you know, I bring the best them out of themselves.

But you’re right, the product is constantly refining and transforming around your actual customer and their challenge or the problems actually evolve as well. And that’s the fascinating thing I’ve seen over nine years, is my community has had a very different type of customer come through. And the culture has shifted maybe 50 times in the last nine years. We’ve gone from a community of affiliates, we’ve had a community of local business marketers, we’ve had ecommerce owners. We

have had information product marketers. We seem to be attracting membership, recurring income people now, and that's because I finally started teaching it, and that's why we're talking about this topic.

So it kind of leads us to the next question. If we have a community, how do we even know if it's a good community or not? How can we tell if it's in good shape or if it's about to collapse?

How healthy is your community?

Diana: This is a great question, because obviously we're all kind of looking for a way to sort of measure things. I think, actually, as a community manager, this is probably one of the most difficult things to measure or sort of show other people. Right? So it's like, well, how do you prove it? How do you show, or how do you know, for yourself as a community manager or a host or the owner of the community, how do you know that it's actually healthy? And I think there's two KPIs that you can mention.

So the first one is pretty simple, and it might sound even a little bit too simple, but it's just level of activity. And so what I mean by that, it's simply the number of posts and the number of comments that are happening on a daily or monthly, probably wouldn't need to do yearly, but like, a daily and monthly recurring basis, just to kind of get a pulse of the level of engagement in your community. Like, how much are people using it? How many times are they asking questions? You know, when somebody posts a question, are people actually jumping in and supporting them and answering that question, or is it like crickets? Is it, post a question and two days later someone says, "You know, I'm really sorry, we can't help you," or this sort of thing.

Obviously, it's a little bit different if it's a coaching community. So, for example, in your case, I'm sure you're jumping in and you're answering the question. But one of the best things you can do is just simply track those numbers. So how many posts, and how many comments?

And depending on the platform, I know for Facebook you can use Grytics. It's a third party application, and it will tell you how many posts there are, how many comments. It breaks it down a little bit. And so you can literally just track it and look at, over time, is it constant? Is it kind of a steady number, or is it increasing,

which would be great? Is it decreasing? And so you can kind of look at that as a general rule of thumb, just to kind of get an idea of, you know, are people using the community? Because that's important. That's like your baseline.

But another KPI that's actually really interesting, it's a little bit more, not subjective, but you're actually going to be getting feedback from your members, and it's called the sense of community. OK? So this was actually introduced, I read about it in Richard Millington's book, it's called *Buzzing Communities*. It's a fantastic book on community strategy.

And so he talked about, there was this study in 1986 called Psychological Sense of Community, and it was written by Mcmillan and Chavis. And what they did is they created this survey of 24 questions that they would send to people. So it could be like community in the sense of like, a job, so all of the employees. Or in this case, your community, your members of the community.

And so what they recommend doing is you take the survey and you send it to your community members, and basically what you get them to do is you get them to rank each statement either a one, two or three. So, one being you completely disagree, like you don't agree with the statement. And number three being you completely agree.

And so just a couple examples of the statement. So for example, "being a member of this community makes me feel good", or "I can trust people in this community". And so there's 24 of these questions, and what you do is you create this survey and you can send it to your members on sort of a regular basis.

They recommend like, don't do it all the time. So, this wouldn't be a monthly thing. This might be like a month after they join, maybe three months or six months in, and then maybe after a year. And then what you can do is you can compare the result. A, you can look at it as a whole, and see if people are really feeling connected and getting a sense of how they feel about the community, but then you can also look at individuals as well. So it can really be telling about, again, looking at the emotional – how do people feel in your community? Do they feel a part of it? Do they feel important? Do they consider other members their friends? So it takes that whole idea of emotion to the next level.

And this would actually be something great to add to your onboarding emails. So

you know, when somebody joins your membership or your community, when they first join, maybe a month after they join, they would get this survey. And then you could have it staggered, like I said – three, six or 12 months, just so that it's a part of when they first join. You don't want to just put the survey into your group, because then you're not going to be able to control at what stage that person's at. So for example, some people, they'll think 'OK, well I'll just put this survey into the community.' For example, into the Facebook group or whatever platform you're using, but then you're not controlling, is this a new member, or is this somebody that's been in here for a year? Right? So you really want to control that. But those would be two more simple KPIs that you can use to really kind of get a feel for how is the community doing?

James: What other KPIs would you be looking at as a community manager?

Other KPIs for community managers

Diana: With that, I would say in terms of, well it depends if you're looking at qualitative and quantitative. So this is again, like I said, so in terms of dealing with community, it's difficult to sort of put a number on it. So there's different ways that you can sort of assess how people feel. So for example, again, what you could do is you could do a similar survey and get more, what do you call it? Like, qualitative feedback from people. So even just having a simple two-part survey where just, how do you feel about the community? Is this something that is a part of your daily routine? Kind of getting more of a qualitative sense.

But in terms of KPIs that you can track, like numbers, I would probably focus more on in terms of the level of engagement. So, how much they're posting and how much they're interacting. I know with Facebook, we also look at even just simple things, like if they're even reacting. So a simple response, like, with an emotion. So it's basically just focusing on, are they in it? Are they using it? And if they're not, what I would do then is actually reach out to them and kind of figure out why they're not using it, to see if it's, is it something to do with the platform? Is it something to do with, maybe, they're not finding value from it. But generally, we focus mostly on just like, how much they're using it.

James: I guess what I'm trying to determine is how you tie back this emotional feeling and health score to like, what's the point of it? Where does it actually lead you? What's the results? Because I'm probably looking at metrics that show you

what happened, some lag metrics.

Community lag metrics

For example, I can see my retention rate as a percentage. And we know from the case study we mentioned in the previous episode that if your churn rate goes into double digit percentages, you're toasted. So I like to keep the churn rate in the one point something percent range.

I also look at the number of months that my average member stays, which is an indicator of, I mean, they have to be happy to stay, I imagine.

I look at things like engagement, we can see the most replies and views per post over certain periods. We can also see who's inactive. So I definitely have tools in place to track down people who stopped participating, and I chase them up again. I'm using a tool called Intercom, which has a slipping away feature, which can detect if someone hasn't logged in, and it will send out an email. It can also prompt a video from me. It can send a notification to Bonjoro, and [we talked about Bonjoro on a previous episode](#), and I can send them a personal video linking them back in.

So I definitely want to get them hooked back in, because I know one metric for sure – if people don't participate and they get their billing renewal reminder, they're out of there. If they do participate, in fact if they're in the highest level engagement, and I think this is a real distinction here, it's worth saying that there are different levels of engagement. If they're in the highest level of engagement, which I think is a private one-to-one discussion, and they're doing that regularly, they will never, ever leave, because they're getting tremendous value. If they're if they're going to local meetups, they're very unlikely to leave. If they're going to the annual live event, unlikely to leave. If they come to the monthly training, they're unlikely to leave.

So there are examples of engagement. I'd rather have one live event attendance than 400 posts in a Facebook group, because that person is committed and they're getting some extreme value for a small input, so I don't know if you've got any kind of grid or scoring system, but I just want to say this, engagement is a loose word that definitely requires some definition.

Diana: Yeah, I think that that's such a good point too, because also it depends what

type of community you're offering, and we kind of mentioned that the beginning, because this applies to so many different types of communities and different formats. And you know, if you're providing coaching versus if it's a community that's for a course, this sort of thing. And that's such a good point.

So, for example, I know that if you're providing coaching, and if students aren't coming to the coaching calls, there's no way. Like you said, if they get that yearly renewal and it's like, 'Whoa, what is this?'



James: It's the number one reason for leaving, is "I'm not using it." So we have to, and this is really one of my criticisms of the typical \$2,000 package that people sell. They would have single-digit percentage of customers actually using the course, unless they do something to support it, like a community or a competency-based training or adding some kind of certification or using an app that makes it easy for people to consume.

If people just get the course in the shrink wrap, it's generally going to stay in the shrink wrap. And we've all done it, you know, my hands up as well. We've bought things and not consumed them. I bet you if you were to poll the audience to this show and ask, how many Kindles are on their iPhone or iPad, there'll be a high percentage that have not been read. And the reason I know that is when you look in the popular highlights of any Kindle, they seem to run out after the first few chapters. And that's because people just don't stick through stuff. So as a community owner, I would say anything that helps customers consume and get value from it would be tremendous.

So let's say we've done your survey and we have got a gauge on how people are feeling. What do we do with that?

You know the emotions – now what?

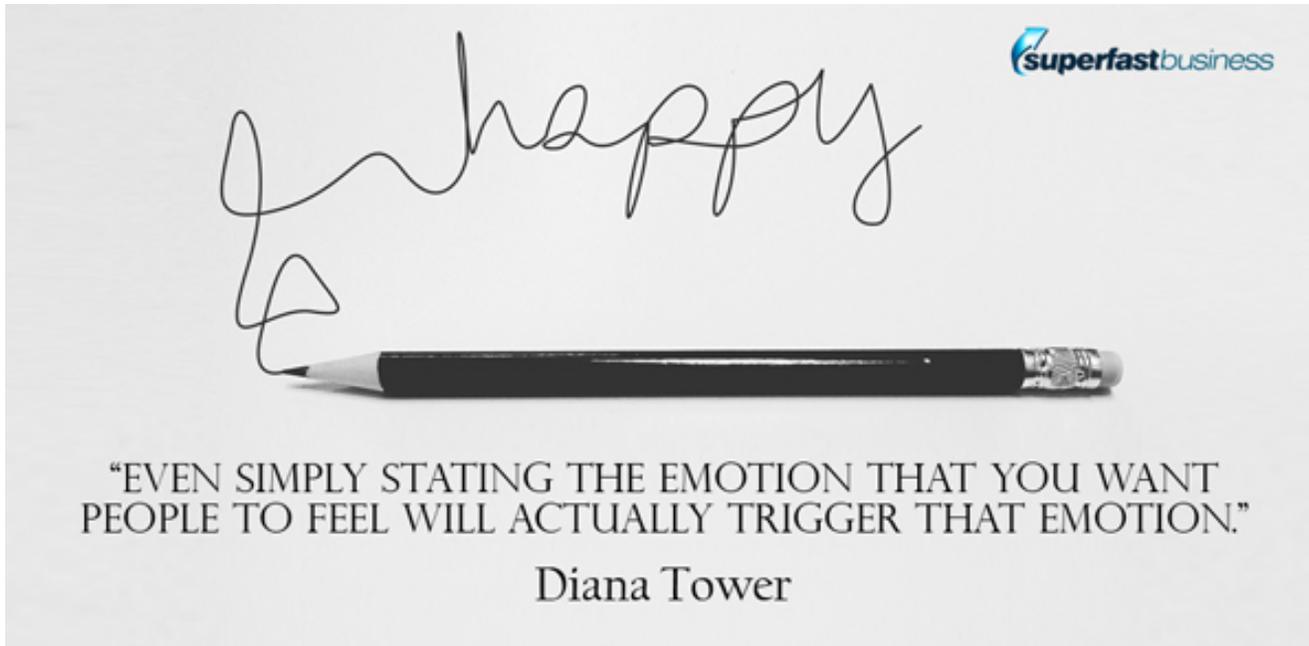
Diana: That's awesome. You figure out what their emotions are, and you're not really sure kind of what to do next. And this is absolutely the best point to be at. I think that most people, they don't even know what the emotions are so they're not really sure what to do. And basically, what you want to do is take those emotions – so let's give you an example.

So, for example, I've been working with Selena Soo. So Selena Soo's a media and publicity strategist, and she has a course that's helping people with getting media and publicity and so we wanted to figure out, like, what's the main emotion? Right? And so we did the survey and it was a clear runner of two. So it was supported, and inspired. And so, what do we actually do with that? Like, what does that mean?

So once you've done that for your community, once you've either maybe set up a poll in Facebook or you've sent out surveys, actually that's a really good point. So even just to like figure out what the emotion is, you want to make sure that you provide some sample emotions for people to really get them thinking. Even if you do a quick Google search for like, emotion wheel, you'll get all these results for like, these rainbow colorful wheels, and they show so many different variations of emotions, like positive, negative. So it's not just that, you know, 'I want to feel happy' here it's like, no, 'I want to feel accepted, supported, proud, elite, special.' Like, all these different types of emotions.

But once you have them, what you want to do is you basically want to make sure that every aspect of your community makes people feel that emotion, or that you trigger that emotion. And so, for example, in a Facebook group, the first thing you see is the Facebook cover image, right? It's at the top of the page. And what most people do is they'll take a picture of themselves and put it on the title of their course or whatever, you know, the membership is, and they pop it in there and it's like, 'OK, there it is.' And that's great, but how does that make the person that's using the community feel? Like, does it really make them feel anything? It's like, 'OK, look, there's the host and this is the course that I'm in,' or 'This is the community membership that I'm in.' And so, what you really want to do is go a step beyond that.

And so, for example, with Selena's group. Originally they just had, it was a black cover photo and it was the logo of the program, which is a really nice logo, but it didn't really make me feel anything. And so what we did was, so how do you make it trigger support and inspiration? So what we did was we actually took pictures of some of the top members of the community and we faded them into the background, sort of like a mosaic. And then we added in, "Welcome to the Insider Circle", and then at the very bottom, we added a tagline. And what we did was, is we just said, "A supportive and inspirational community".



And this is the thing – with emotions, it doesn't take much to get people to feel that emotion. So even simply stating the emotion that you want people to feel will actually trigger that emotion. And so, by having that visually in your cover image, this could also be images that you share in your forum or in whatever platform you're using, whenever you're using an image, you want to ask yourself, 'Does this make them feel the way they want to feel?' And if it doesn't, you need to change that image. And so, this can apply to cover images, if it's with a post, just making sure that it actually makes people feel the way they want to feel.

And this also applies not just with images, but this applies to anything that you're writing. So in a Facebook community, when I'm doing kind of an audit, I'm looking at all the different places where there's static copies. This could be the group description, the welcome post, there's also the pinned post at the top that stays in one place, and also guidelines.

And so, this also applies if you're not on Facebook. So for example, James, when

you're replying to people and you're giving them advice, what you want to do is you just want to make sure that the way that you're providing that advice is going to make them feel a certain way. So imagine, if your community really wants to feel proud of themselves, what you would do is you would literally sprinkle in the fact that you're proud of them.

So for example, imagine if one of your community members, you know, they're trying to launch a certain product and they do it and it was really successful. Even simply you saying like, "Wow, you did this. I'm really proud of you," that simple sentence and even just stating the emotion in writing is going to trigger that emotion. And so what you can do as a community host, you can just, A, you can look at all of your static copy, so like your group description or a profile or a main post, and just ask yourself, does this post make them feel a certain way? If it doesn't, you need to change it.

And then, also, whenever you're interacting in your community, make sure that you're sort of just, take a step back and say, 'OK, how is this going to make them feel?' Is this going to make them feel supported, or is this going to make them... And maybe it's not even a warm and fuzzy emotion, maybe people want you to be really hard with them, because there's a lot of communities out there where they want to be kind of challenged or pushed. And so, if that's what they want and you're giving them support, they're not going to get the message, at least emotionally. So you really want to focus on just asking yourself, stepping back and saying, 'Hey, is this making them feel the way they want to feel?'

And this can apply to anything. So even when you're writing a blog post, with a podcast, in videos that you make, any sort of content that you're making, you want to make sure that people are reacting to it emotionally in a way that they want to. So it's either strengthening a positive emotion or pushing down or making less strong, say, an insecurity. So if people don't want to feel excluded or stupid or something negative, if what you're doing minimizes that, that's a win for you as well.

James: Yeah. And you know, I'll support that, that people when you survey them will often reflect things that have been positioned in the sales page. They'll actually restate things that were put there in the sales page, so they're being transformed with the message that you have there.

Achieving authenticity

And I think if you, as a business person with a community, we've talked about in the previous episode that it's a lot like being a parent. If you do it for long enough and you keep busy enough, eventually any facade or fake exterior is going to be shot down. You'll end up becoming yourself. So I would suggest people take an authentic view.

Diana: Oh, yes.

James: I think certainly, when we're talking about combining your emotion across community posts, videos, I think there's a word for that, and that's integrity. That's, everything is integrated. And if you can combine that with your true self, then that's authentic and so you tend to attract a community of people who want to be around the type of authentic person you are, if you are the same person in all of those mediums. If you're the same having a coffee at a beach resort as you are standing on stage at an event as you are on a podcast as you are in a forum post as you are in a video, people really get to know the real you. And that is going to help your retention through the roof.

Diana: Yeah, that's a really good point. And it's so funny because that's my assumption, like it's authentic. Like, you need to be yourself. The worst thing you can do is go into a community and be like, 'Alright, I'm going to make people feel proud right now,' and just like search for opportunities, or like to really sort of lay it on thick, I guess. It needs to be real, because people will smell it.

James: I really take your point. Aside from stepping back, I think one of the best things to do is to step across to the other side of the desk and be in that customer's shoes. I think it helps to have a high degree of empathy. If you're going to run a community, you really have to think about it from the customer's perspective.

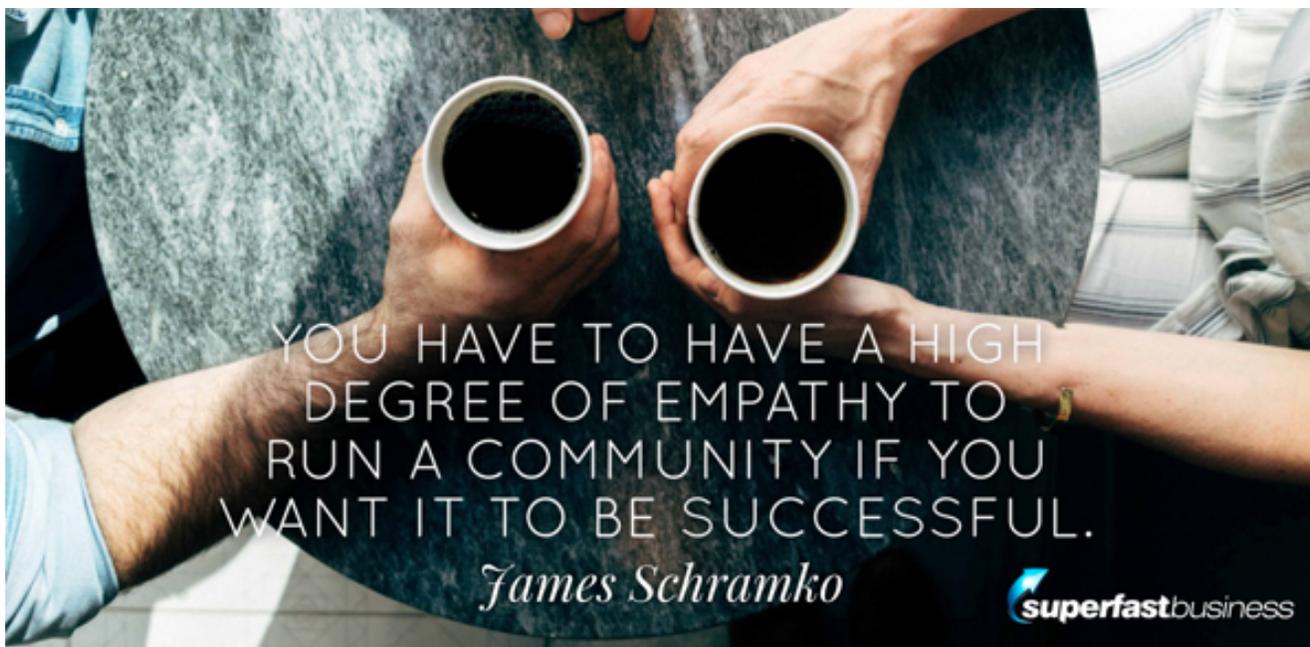
The importance of empathy

And I noticed this dramatic change – when we switched on the private coaching section, my community came to life. It was like I had a garden bed, and there were some roses, or whatever. But when I turn on the private community that only I can see and they can only see me and no one else, then this massive forest appeared. It's like people came out and said things they would never say in a group

environment, privately, where they could really share their insecurities and their fears and their challenges and their frustrations without any fear of embarrassment or pride attack or someone else giving them an opinion they don't want.

So creating that environment, that safe place, was a game changer for us and really that taught me that the person had always been carrying that concern, but had been lurking or hiding behind the invisible wall, waiting for an opportunity to be able to share this. So that was such an instructional lesson.

And once I got into the customer's shoes on that, then I was able to make sure, you know, when someone's posting a private discussion thread with me, even though no one else is looking, I still have to be in their shoes and remember they're probably a little bit intimidated by me or concerned that I might come back and give them some feedback that makes them feel uncomfortable, and I have to remember to be in their shoes.



You know, I've been doing this long enough and I've got enough confidence and experience to not experience that sheer terror that people go through when, you know, they're swinging from the job to their full-time business or they're not quite able to meet their credit card payments at the end of each month. It's been a long time since I was in that situation, you know, like decades. So you've got to be in your customer's shoes. You have to have a high degree of empathy to run a community if you want it to be successful.

And that the thing I was talking about before about being the same across all

mediums, it still fascinates me where you get some people being all like conversational and chilled out in their emails and then the next time you see them they're in a suit or a tuxedo or something on stage, and I'm like, what happened? Like, when did we shift into this different personality? And that I find unusual.

Diana: Well, and it's just, it sort of throws people off because it makes them question, which is the real person, right? So are your emails fake, or is the suit fake? And so, yeah, I completely agree, this idea of just being authentic. And you know, empathy is huge. I think that you need empathy and strategy with community. And it's funny, because they sound kind of not the same. So it's like, oh, if you're going to be strategic, it's like you're manipulating people, maybe, with emotion.

James: There's nothing wrong with manipulation. I think of it like this: if you had a brain tumor, you want your surgeon to be manipulating that tumor out of your head without cutting anything extra, right? Like, manipulation is OK if it's to help somebody.

Diana: Right, it's the intention. The why.

Manipulation and onboarding

James: Like, a classic manipulation is the onboarding sequence of a membership. Example, in my membership, when someone joins, we will have tagged them with one of four categories of where their challenge is, and we remove the other three. So we've manipulated that environment to only show the thing that the customer's having a challenge with and to remove the three non-essential things, which they still get full access to, but we take it away from their sphere of vision, like the blinkers on a horse, because I know they're going to get the fastest possible result.

It'd be like going into a supermarket with a shopping list, and saying, go to aisle 10, 12 and 15. It's on the third shelf halfway down the aisle. Like, get in, get what they need and get out without getting overwhelmed. It's all in there, and they can go back later. But we've given them a specific thing. So the onboarding is a classic case of positive manipulation.

Diana: Exactly. And that's the thing, onboarding is so crucial, because the first thing you need people to do is just to engage, to use it, to do something and to feel, it's like, to get a hit of those emotions that they want. So it's like, if they go into your

community and they post something and they get the support they need, or they get the kick in the ass that they need, like that's going to kind of set something in their mind where it's like, 'Hey, I come in here and I get what I need,' and they're going to come back. So I think the key with onboarding, I love that you've got things sort of setup so that they get what they need and then get out.

But yeah, just making sure that people can really make use of it and that it's easy, that it kind of fits into their days, that they can really get in, use it and get benefit from it, and then move on.

James: And it's such a small world, because I refocused on that after spending time helping out [Ryan Levesque](#) grow his business, and it was at Ryan's event in Texas where I met Selena Soo, who introduced us.

And this whole selection thing reminded me of what we used to do at the Mercedes-Benz dealership. When a customer would come in, we had an acronym called SPACED, and we had to quickly identify, of the SPACED acronym, which one was most interesting for the customer. And it was, when someone's looking at a Mercedes-Benz they're either interested in Safety, Performance, Appearance, Comfort, Economy or Durability. And if you could find that out, and then when you present the vehicle or you're talking about the benefits of a vehicle, you could focus on the things relating to that core need and ignore the others. So someone who's interested in performance may not necessarily care if the interior fabric's going to last 300,000 miles, but they might be interested to know the specific output of the engine and the torque and the acceleration times.

So it's really important to focus on things that are relevant to a customer and I've found as a community member, we haven't really talked about this, but I'd love to get your thoughts on this. Over time, there are things you have to prune and then things you have to promote. I guess we call that the two P's. I just made that up. But yeah, it really is like a garden metaphor here, but in my community, there's areas that'll start to get more well used, so I promote them into more featured areas. So when I got my segmentation, I created the four main sections as the core sections, so that people could easily find them. And then I pruned off some of the other areas that weren't really big enough to stand on their own or rolled them back into the four main areas. It's important to modify your community as you discover these different preferences and which things create the most value.

Onboarding insights and tips

And again, if you can, when you're onboarding people, move people directly to the thing that is most interesting to them, that's helpful. Should we just talk about onboarding for a few minutes?

Diana: Yeah, I think that with onboarding, like we touched on, with onboarding emails. I think that that's a fabulous way to really kind of get people connected to certain information. So obviously, my experience is more focused on Facebook. But I think that this applies to pretty much any community as well. But there's so many different things that you can do within the community that will make the onboarding process easier. So I would say, definitely starting with those emails.

And one thing to mention as well with the emails is to really focus on either, if you have a refund period of time, really focusing in on making sure that people are actually getting value and using the community within that time, because obviously it's going to reduce the amount of refunds you get if you have a refund period. But in terms of your membership, the same thing applies. So for example, you said you had like, a 12-month subscription. You want to be making sure that people are obviously getting value throughout the year, but especially at the end when they are going to be getting that email saying, hey, it's time to re-subscribe. You want them to feel like, hey, I was in there last week or yesterday and I got massive value, there's no way that I'm not going to re-subscribe.

So I think that having an onboarding sequence that really takes that into consideration... And you can even look at your data as well. If you notice that there's a certain period of time where maybe it's five months in, people are dropping off, you can have emails that are sort of strategically placed at certain times to kind of help get people in.

And by get people in, I don't mean just like linking to your community and saying, hey, come to the community. You know, you could feature a certain discussion that's going on, or you could, for example, if you've got the segmentation like you have, you can kind of draw people in. Like, we know that you're focusing on this - here's a great discussion that you might want to jump in on or that might add you some value. So doing that with emails, I think, is important, but even setting up the community so that it's easy for people to kind of jump in.

And so we touched a little bit on this in the [last episode](#) with Facebook. So for example, I recommend having a roadmap document that really maps out some of the key posts and some of the course-related information, if you have a course with that community. And so, you make it easy for them to navigate. And I think that that's important, is making sure that the community is easy, that it's not something that is hard or that they have to kind of work on. It's just, you go in, you participate, you get your value.

And so, having that roadmap that really links out to easy posts to dump to is really important, but then also creating a safe space for these people that are new. So, I mean, if you've got a really strong, established community where everyone is really tight-knit... Like, imagine it like in real life. It's like, imagine you go to a dinner and everybody is friends and you're the only person that doesn't know anybody else – that can be really intimidating. And so you really want to find a way to draw a bridge between the people that are established in in the community, maybe they've been there for years, and really finding a way to bridge the gap between people that are new and these people that are sort of like the vets of the community.

And one way to do that would be creating even just a place for new people to go and maybe ask simple questions. Because I think sometimes people just feel a little bit intimidated. They're not really sure how to interact, they don't want to make a mistake. They don't want to feel stupid. So, you know, having that safe space, that might be something as simple as just creating a thread for beginner questions or new people. If you're new in town, this sort of thing, just creating that safe space for them.

Avoid doing THIS

And then also one thing to consider, but not to go overboard, this is something that comes up a lot with Facebook groups and it's annoying. So this idea of having like, those daily threads. So it's like, Monday motivation, or Tuesday talk day, I don't know, these themed rhyming posts that automatically get posted and there is no thought really put into them. I personally hate it. It's like, every day there's this new post. You have to be really careful because sometimes, nobody will interact with them. So all these posts just keep coming out and nobody's engaging with them, which is not what you want.

But the right way to approach that is to think about, again, think about what would

help your audience, what would help your members the most. And so maybe that would be, you know, having some sort of a goal-setting thread on Monday. And then on Friday, you could check in with those people and say, “Hey, on Monday, you said you were going to finish your sales page. How’s that going?” Checking in with people, kind of maybe providing more accountability. So that’s something to look at.

But you know, I love about what you said about pruning because, for example, if you have one of these threads and you see that people maybe aren’t engaging with a thread, kill the thread. Don’t just have, you know, the Wednesday, whatever day post and keep doing it because well, I should be doing it. If it’s not working, remove it and do something else. Find something that actually people are finding value with. And so that can be something as simple as just looking at your community and seeing like, hey, people really like to, for example, if they really like to kind of brag about their wins, create a thread or a place for them to just brag about their wins. Look at what they’re doing and make it easier for them to do more of that.

And I think that when a community is a little bit more established, so a couple of other things that you can do... Like, once you’ve got people in the community, they’re definitely established, you can go a step further and you can facilitate things like, maybe a buddy system or mini mastermind groups or creating events or meetups, or even having a challenge in your community.

Like, if you notice a lot of people, imagine if it’s like a copywriting coaching community and people are struggling with writing a sales page or something, you can create some sort of a challenge that’s really going to kind of light a fire under their butt to get something done and to share it and sort of to come together and help and support each other with other people that are doing the same thing.

So I would say, in terms of onboarding, there’s lots of different things you can do, at the beginning. So like, with emails, when they first get in there, and then also when your community is a little bit more established.

Onboarding tips from SuperFastBusiness

James: Yes, great tips there. And I would share a couple that we have as well. Obviously, an introduction thing is good. It’s a nice, safe place where I ask people to share why they’re there. I want to get the motivation, so I can really get quickly into

their shoes.

We help people get the app. So if you're not on Facebook, it's essential to get an app. We got one from [TheAppMatch.com](https://www.theappmatch.com). [Jarrod Robinson](#) put up an app, so our forum is living on the homepage of our customer's Android or iPhone and that's so important. It actually boosted our engagement and usage and retention, everything just went through the roof when we had that.

I created a video called Top Ways To Get Value From This Community - I literally stepped out the main ways that you can get value and tried to think of what sort of things people would be interested in. Aside from getting coaching and training, they're also able to meet each other and come to live training.

And they can even sell their own thing, they can use the signature real estate, which is a handy feature off Facebook. You can give people their own little bit of real estate to promote. So if anyone is serving the community with a product or service, then every time they post something valuable, they can sort of lead people to their own product or solution. And what happens with that is, let's say someone's a Facebook ads expert, and then they go and contribute lots of great content in the Facebook section, and someone's there because they want to learn about Facebook and they keep seeing these fantastic, valuable posts, and then that person's got a link to their website under each of their answers, it's only a matter of time until that customer goes and buys. And now, I've created a return on investment for my Facebook ad representative, so that you end up attracting a community of fantastic suppliers who are very knowledgeable and can be experts in things that you're not, as the community owner.

But even simple things like sharing book reviews and that sort of stuff has been wildly popular in our community. And you get people are sharing what they got from books and documentaries and movies, and those things are really well-received, even though it's something that seems like very general and widely out there in the in the world marketplace, but book reviews from busy people are really quite valuable.

What NOT to do on Facebook

Diana: I think you touched on something that's really interesting, and I just want to provide maybe a little bit of perspective for somebody that maybe does have a

Facebook group. So what you said about having the signature at the bottom, that's a really great way for people to kind of like, not promote themselves, but they're offering value, but then they do have that link to their website. And what I would say for people that have a Facebook group, what you can do is really just encourage your members to update their Facebook profiles. And so, this is something, actually I wrote a post about it, and it was about how to, because what people do sometimes is they'll go into a Facebook group and they want to promote themselves...

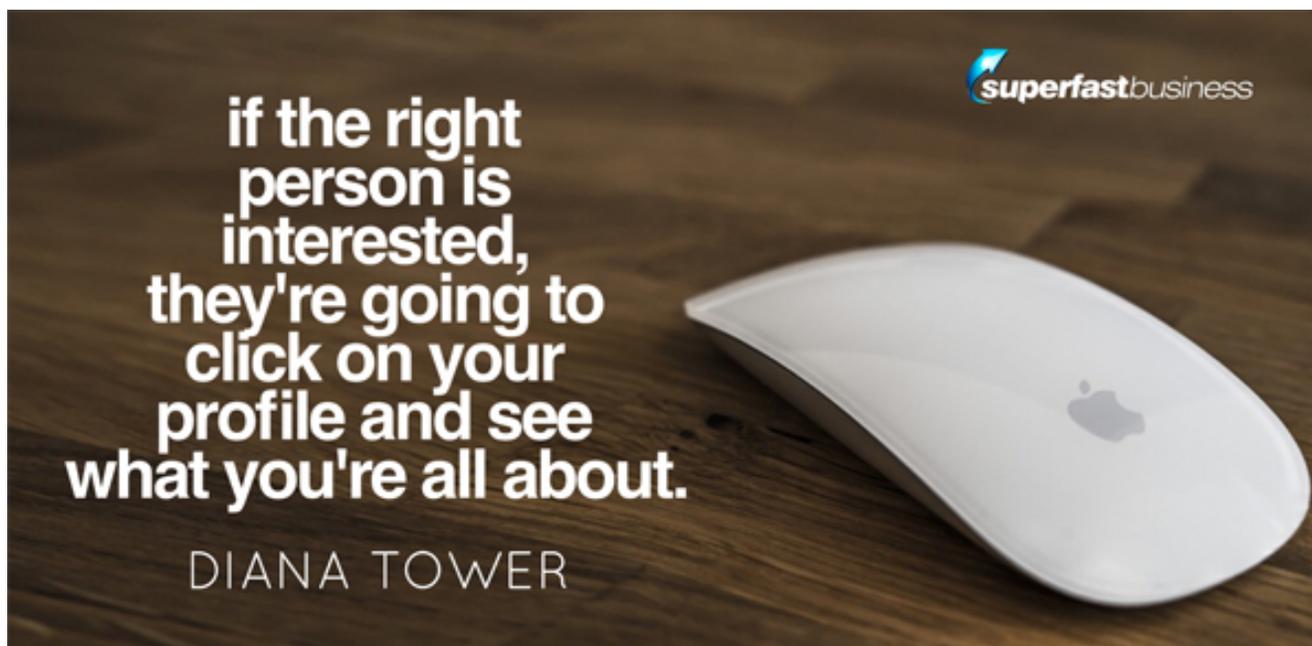
James: In the first 10 minutes, they go and sell themselves?

Diana: Oh my god, it's the worst thing ever. Exactly.

James: I just hit the delete key straightaway.

Diana: Yeah, exactly. Just delete. Delete, right?

James: I don't know how anyone ever thinks that's a great idea. But if you do contribute, it's only a matter of time till someone finds you. It's great to update your profile.



Diana: That's the thing, right? If you go in and you answer a question and you just like, drop it, like you just drop so much information, so much value, and there's no links to your business, there's no links to your website, nothing, what are people going to do? They're going to be like, who is this person? They're going to click on your profile, and if in the, what is it, underneath your profile picture, if you put in

the about section, you could just say, I help this type of person do this, and you can have a link to your website. And it's the same situation that you're saying, like, you're not promoting yourself and you're not saying, hey, come to my website. But if the right person is interested, they're going to click on your profile and see what you're all about. And then they'll see, oh look, here's your website. And then they'll click over.

James: What a perfect way to end this two-part series Diana, because this is the part where I get to say thank you so much for sharing generously over these two episodes. You've been such a wonderful guest, full of fantastic information. I've enjoyed riffing with you on this topic. And this is where you get to mention your website, Diana, because I'm sure by now, if someone's interested in getting help with community strategy or any of the topics you've talked about, where can they go and check you out?

Diana: Well, they can check me out at my name. So it's DianaTower.com, and I've actually written two ultimate guides on how to build a profitable online community based on either Facebook or [Slack](#), and also how to engage people. And I like making my own GIFs. So if you enjoy silly GIFs and reading awesome content about community, definitely go check it out.

James: Yeah, I'll testify to that, Diana sent me a fantastic custom GIF, I did send you a picture today. I really stepped up my participation. I don't know if you got it. I sent you a custom message.

Diana: You did? I did not get it. I'll have to go check.

James: It'll be sitting there for you in Facebook Messenger, you'll probably get a giggle. So, DianaTower.com. Thanks so much for coming and sharing.

Look, if you've been listening to this and you have a community, or you're interested in growing a community, that's the kind of thing I could help with too. You should definitely [join the membership](#). Check out Diana's stuff, she's got some great guides for you. I'm James Schramko. You've been listening to SuperFastBusiness.com, and we'll catch up with you on a future episode.



Build and run your own
successful paid
community with
James's help

[CLICK HERE](#)