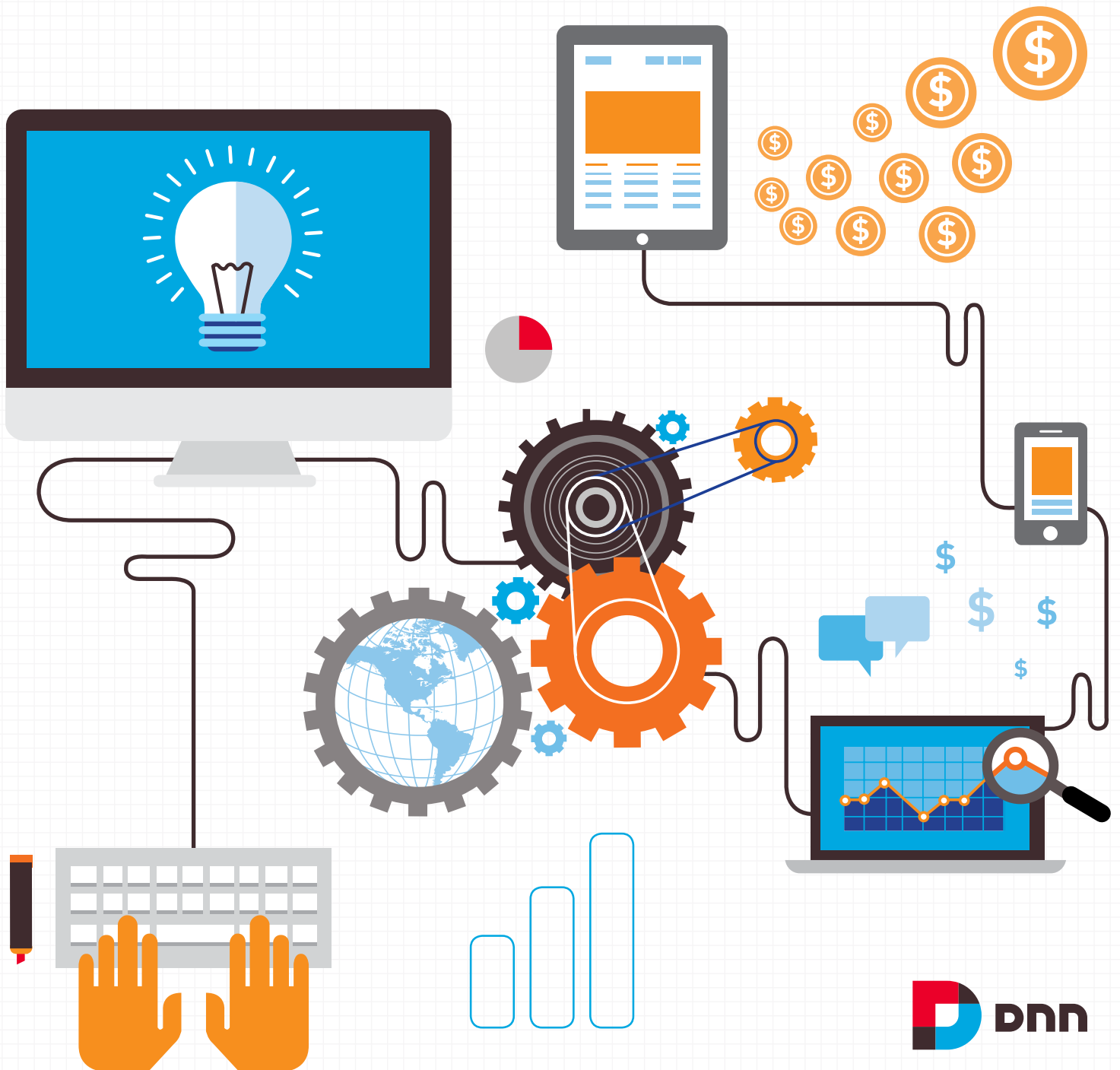


# The Data-Driven Community Manager



# Introduction

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In 2011, marketers at HGTV noticed that a new social media platform called Pinterest was driving visitors to HGTV.com, and this traffic was doubling every month. By the end of the year, Pinterest had generated 2.5 million views on the HGTV site.<sup>1</sup>

While the HGTV marketing team knew little about Pinterest or its users, they set out to convert these people into long-term customers.

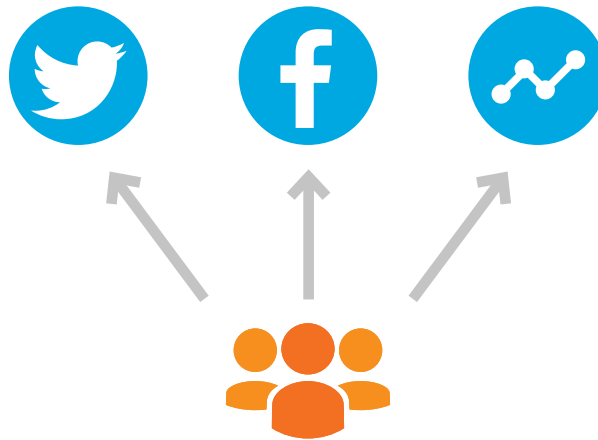
Using website analytics and other research, HGTV learned that Pinterest was generating three times more visits than Facebook and that Pinterest's demographic (primarily educated women) matched HGTV's. Drilling deeper, they learned that on Sundays, women coming from Pinterest were visiting 10 or more HGTV.com pages to read home-improvement content.

HGTV applied this newfound knowledge, tailoring its website content to cater more to this crowd and ensure that these new visitors would become longtime, engaged community members. Without data analysis, the company would have missed a valuable opportunity.

Parallels exist between online community managers and the marketers at HGTV. By being data-driven, community managers can spot trends, make decisions and take actions based on data. In this white paper, we'll explore how data-driven community managers can create sustainable engagement in their online communities.

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<sup>1</sup>. SocialMedia.org, "Data-driven decisions for the visual social web"  
<http://vimeo.com/93091970>



## The Social Revolution and the Data Revolution

There is little disagreement that social media has transformed consumer behavior and therefore, how marketers do their jobs. Initially impacting the B2C space, social media now also plays a huge role in the B2B buying process and in B2B marketing and sales.

Over this same time period, marketers have become data-driven due to the rapid emergence and adoption of a range of marketing technologies. Web analytics, social media monitoring and marketing automation are now fairly common marketing tools, making it nearly impossible to base decisions on gut instinct. Marketers use data to attract visitors to their site, track their behavior, convert them to leads or customers and maintain a continuous electronic dialogue - all via analytics and automation.

Now social media is morphing. Buyers who have interacted with brands on Facebook and Twitter for years are gravitating toward social communities housed on company websites, where they've found helpful customer service and forums that provide insights on their favorite products and services. How does today's data-driven marketer react? By measuring, of course!

Marketers are applying a similar data-driven, analytical approach to their branded online communities in order to acquire customers, understand customer needs and behaviors, increase sales and meet any number of other objectives.

In this guide, we outline eight metrics that give companies the best indication of the health and effectiveness of their online communities, where to get the data and how to interpret it. ▶



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## Convert visitors to registered members & track activity.



The ultimate goal of an online community is to convert website traffic into revenue, but many companies struggle to do this. To create conversions, the first step is to get visitors to register with the site. Once you've brought them into the fold, track their behavior as they like and share content and post their own messages.

### How to convert visitors to registered members:



Require registration in order to interact within the community.



Create incentives for existing members to help drive new registrations.



Run a referral program (Offer a \$20 Amazon gift card for referring five new users.).



Run online campaigns (media partners, social media).

**How to track:** Calculate the percentage of page views from registered users to total page views in your community. If the community percentage is low, redouble your efforts to encourage visitors to sign up.

**Where to get the data:** This may come from a combination of your content management system (CMS), web analytics software and online community software.

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## Monitor usage patterns to ensure a consistent engagement.



For an online community to thrive, it needs mere visitors to become active users who comment and create content to spark interactions. Using website analytics, monitor the makeup of members to ensure that enough users are contributing.

### First, categorize your users:

**Active:** Viewed at least one piece of content

**Participant:** Interacted with at least one piece of content (e.g., commented, liked, replied, voted or flagged)

**Contributor:** Created at least one piece of content (e.g., blog, idea, question, group or event)

### User Categories Sample

|              | New Members | Existing Members |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| Active       | 5,000       | 95,000           |
| Participants | 2,150       | 52,500           |
| Contributors | 85          | 2,950            |
| Percentages  |             |                  |
| Active       | 65%         | 63%              |
| Participant  | 28%         | 35%              |
| Contributor  | 7%          | 2%               |

### How to Read Your Usage Patterns

1. Percentages that move to the right indicate stronger participation. 50-30-20 is far better than 80-15-5, because 50% active engagement (30% participant, 20% contributor) is far better than 20% engagement (15%/5%).
2. Decreases in Participant and Contributor percentages indicate a drop in activity and engagement—a cause for concern. Identify the root causes, and then take corrective action.

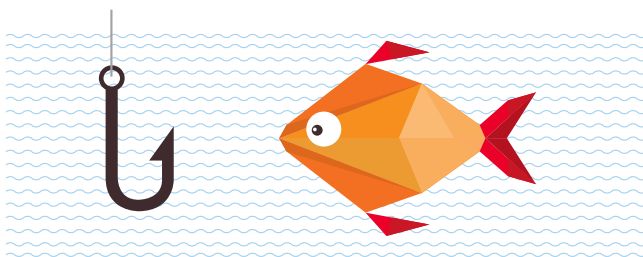
3. Monitor trends within each category (New and Existing). Also compare percentages across categories (e.g., this month, Participant-% is higher for existing members compared to new members. Why is that?).

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. Additional tools, such as Microsoft Excel, may be required to process the data and generate reports.



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## Actively monitor new members to keep them engaged.



A primary reason that people don't stick with online communities is that they simply lose interest in the site's discussions and content. Hook these members early on, and you're more likely to retain them as

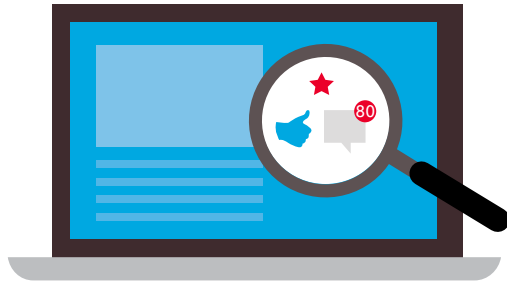
active and loyal users over the long term. Fail to impress them now, and you've likely lost them for good. The key is to regularly gauge members' interest and activity levels so that you can respond quickly with more engaging content when interest flags.

Each month, review the set of users who registered during the prior month and compare their active sessions and average session time to see whether the numbers are shifting.

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. Additional tools, such as Microsoft Excel, may be required to process the data and generate reports.

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## Check on the individual components of the community.



You could spend hours browsing blogs, forum discussions and polls, and still come away with just a vague idea of how various site components are performing. But, by examining data, you can see exactly how engagement is shifting with each site component and compare past data to discover trends.

When monitoring community components, study the following:

1. Number of posts by content area
2. Content area posts as a percentage of total

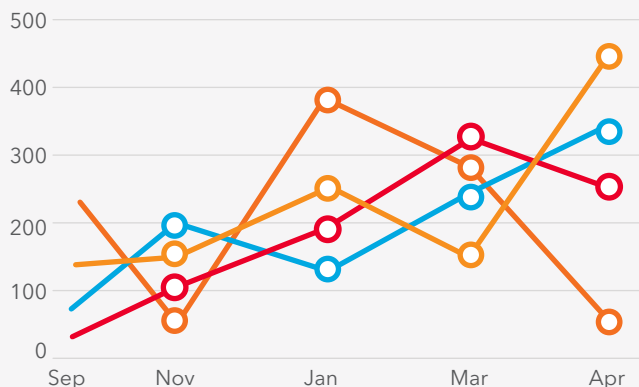
3. Weighted activity count by content area (For example, Like = 1x, bookmark = 1x, comment = 3x, vote = 3x)

### How to read the participation in community components:

1. For each content area, track the “percentage of total posts” from one month to the next. Look for changes. If blogs used to comprise 22% of all posts but increased this month to 50%, what caused the increase in blog activity?
2. Track weighted activity month to month. Weighted activity is a good counterbalance to “percentage of total posts.” For instance, ideas may have the lowest “percentage of total” but the highest weighted activity.

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. Additional tools, such as Microsoft Excel, may be required to process the data and generate reports.

Cumulative Content Creation



- Blogs
- Discussions
- Questions
- Ideas

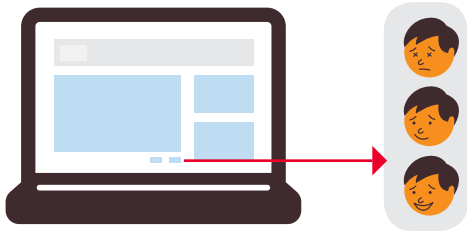
Content Distribution



- Blogs
- Discussions
- Questions
- Ideas

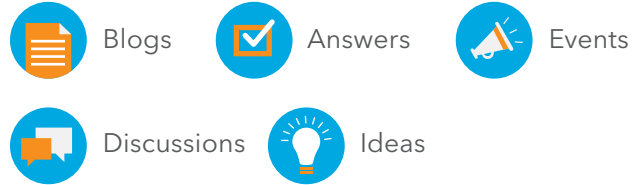
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## Measure your community's reaction and response.



It's inevitable that you'll sometimes have to tweak your approach to blogs and other components to ensure that the community remains attractive and compelling. To see whether the community is fresh or growing stale, you should analyze members' Mean Time to Respond (MTTR) when they react to discussions, event invitations, polls and other queries.

Track MTTR for each of your content areas:



You'll likely find distinct response patterns based on each content area. For instance, discussions may always have a lower MTTR than blogs, and that's fine. The important thing is to track trends in each content area over time.

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. Additional tools, such as Microsoft Excel, may be required to process the data and generate reports.

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## Measure community members' level of engagement.



In addition to measuring response times, you can track the engagement of all users over time. It's a good idea to focus on the most active users and measure their level of involvement, because these influencers will drive others to your site. By using an engagement score, you can keep tabs on just how much community members are participating.

Sum up the weighted values for each metric, and then normalize to a scale from 0 (lower score) to 100 (highest score).

### To Calculate Engagement Score:

| Metric                                                | Weight |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Average time on page                                  | 1      |
| Total time on site                                    | 1      |
| Total number of likes the user's content has received | 5      |
| Total number of posts the user has authored           | 10     |
| Total number of responses user's content has received | 5      |
| Number of logins                                      | 2      |
| Sum of votes the user's posts has received            | 3      |

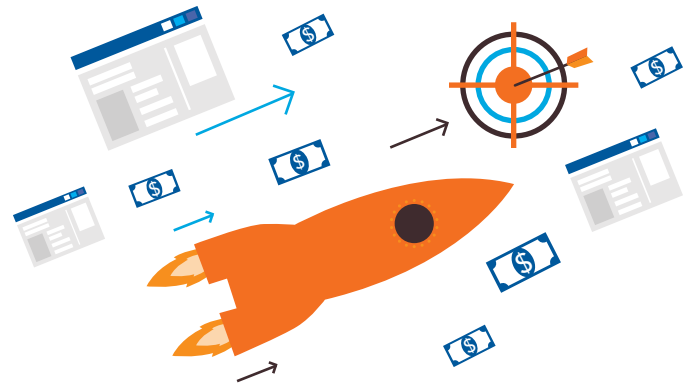
Then, track the mean and median engagement scores month to month.

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. DNN's Evoq Social calculates an Engagement Score for all users. Each user's Engagement Score is available to community managers.

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## Analyze the distribution of community influencers.

One of your primary goals is to capitalize on the energy of community influencers, because they can be powerful brand advocates. Through data analysis, you can create an “influence score” to better understand how individuals prefer to participate, and then make adjustments to optimize behavior.



### To Calculate Influence Score:

| Metric                                                                     | Weight |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Number of friends the user has                                             | 1      |
| Number of friends the user has relative to the number of users on the site | 2      |
| Number of posts the user has authored                                      | 1      |
| Total number of likes the user’s content has received                      | 1      |
| Average number of likes per post the user has received                     | 2      |
| Total number of views the user’s content has received                      | 2      |
| Total number of responses the user’s content has received                  | 1      |
| Average number of responses per post the user’s content has received       | 4      |
| Total number of accepted answers the user has posted                       | 10     |
| Total number of ideas the user has submitted that have been delivered      | 10     |
| Total number of active events the user has created                         | 20     |
| Number of content items the user has had flagged by administrators         | 30     |

Sum up the weighted values for each metric, and then normalize to a scale from 0 to 100. Then, track the mean and median influence scores and influence score percentages from one month to the next.

Sample question to ask when analyzing the data: Why do most of my users reside in the 0-25 and 26-50 range of influence scores?

### Track influence score percentages month to month:

| Influence Score | Percentage of Users |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 0-25            | 42%                 |
| 26-50           | 19%                 |
| 51-75           | 24%                 |
| 76-100          | 15%                 |

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. DNN’s Evoq Social calculates an Influence Score for all users. Each user’s Influence Score is available to community managers.



## Track connections in the online community.



Connections are important to your community's success. The more members are able to find, discover and connect with other members, the more active and loyal they'll remain to the community.

- Examine user data to track the number of connections made each month. Also track the mean number of connections made per user per month.
- Keep in mind that connections can be either uni-directional ("follow") or bi-directional ("friend") relationships.

**Where to get the data:** Your online community software. Additional tools, such as Microsoft Excel, may be required to process the data and generate reports.

## SUMMARY

You can't run a successful online community on autopilot, assuming "If you build it, they will come." Once you've constructed the community framework, you must take action to recruit members and keep them engaged. This is a difficult task, because technologies and market trends are always shifting and changing consumer behavior. Who knows when or how the next Pinterest or Instagram will reshape the landscape? Fortunately, you have powerful data

at your fingertips that can reveal insights that simply can't be gleaned from gut instincts.

Need some assistance in using data to drive decisions in your online community? DNN can help.

Contact our Sales team to schedule a consultation:

**650.288.3150**  
[sales@dnnsoftware.com](mailto:sales@dnnsoftware.com)



### About DNN Software

DNN provides a suite of solutions for creating rich, rewarding online experiences for customers, partners and employees. DNN products and technology are the foundation for 750,000+ websites worldwide. In addition to our commercial CMS and social community solutions, DNN is the steward of the DNN Platform Open Source Project.

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