

(Webinar) 2026 Community Benchmark Briefing: The Strategies Behind High Engagement

Webinar Transcript

0:03

Hi, everyone.

0:04

Welcome to today's program.

0:08

I'm just going to do a little administrative situation and get one of our panelists in here.

0:27

All right, now we've got the whole crew.

0:29

Sorry about that, Rebecca.

0:32

I'm sure folks who have joined us have seen on webinar before the technical difficulties you can run into, but we figured it out.

0:40

So I'm glad to have you all here today, especially the folks joining me to present on our panel.

0:47

And we're looking forward to diving into the community benchmark report data.

0:52

Before we get started, I'm just going to give people a little bit of time to join and as we're getting started here, if folks want to share where they're joining from, I think that's always a fun way to see where everybody's coming in from.

1:19

All righty, I see folks are joining.

1:23

Let's see the chat here.

1:27

I see folks are joining from all over.

1:31

We've got people from Canada, Philly, Chicago, Baltimore, lots of folks coming in.

1:40

Well, I will go ahead and get us started just so that we don't run out of time today.

1:44

Appreciate you all being with us and hopefully you're in the right place.

1:47

This is our community benchmark briefing and we're going to cover some highlights from Higher Logic 2026 Association Community Benchmark.

1:56

And we're also going to hear from the lovely Co presenters joining me about their strategies for community engagement.

2:05

And before we start, I'll cover like before we dive into the content itself, I'll cover some housekeeping things.

2:12

We will be sharing the slides from this program after the live viewing.

2:17

And if you would like to view the full community benchmark report, I'm going to put AQR code for that up on the slide in a moment.

2:26

But before I do, I will introduce myself and I will let our presenters introduce themselves.

2:31

I am Kelly Whalen, I am Higher Logic Senior content marketing manager and I work on this report, which is part of why I'm here.

2:40

I look at all the data and I put together some of the stories that we have to share about the data and I'm joined today by my awesome Co presenters.

2:48

Aaron, do you want to start by introducing yourself because you're at the top of my screen.

2:52

We can.

2:53

Hi everyone.

2:54

Thank you Kelly for the introduction.

2:55

My name is Aaron.

2:56

She her I'm a senior strategic services consultant here at Higher Logic, been here for six years and I'm looking forward to sharing some insights today.

3:04

Georgina, do you want to go next?

3:06

Yeah, absolutely.

3:07

Hey everybody, I'm Georgina Donahue.

3:09

I am the senior director of product strategy and innovation.

3:12

Fun fact, I was a Higher Logic customer three times over before I joined working at Higher Logic a little bit over a year ago.

3:19

So now I have the very great pleasure of helping to build all of the tools and features that I daydreamed about when I was a customer.

3:27

And I also am so grateful to Kelly for putting this report together because it's something that I used in my hands on community management practice for many, many years.

3:37

So love this report, Becca.

3:41

Hey guys, I'm Becca Weidner.

3:43

I also came from the association world, but only one association where I worked for 11 years in online

community and marketing before I moved over to Higher Logic where I've been four years and I'm helping customer strategize around their e-mail and community strategies.

4:04

Awesome.

4:05

Thank you all for joining me today.

4:07

I am really excited.

4:08

I know I'm going to learn from you just as much as our attendees.

4:11

So I'm really excited to jump in.

4:14

I'm going to go ahead and share a few slides.

4:16

This is going to be a slide light presentation today, in part because I really want us to be able to get into the discussion with our presenters, but I do want to share a few things on the screen for folks, so let me go ahead and do that.

4:32

So today's agenda, we're going to talk about what healthy engagement looks like and the data that we have to show that and then the strategies for how you can measure.

4:41

Then we're going to talk about helping members participate in return and talking about how to drive that engagement that you like to see in your community.

4:49

Then we're going to talk about connecting community to the member experience and why that matters and some of the ways you can do it.

4:55

And we're going to wrap up with talking about ways that you can make your community more useful, but also more manageable for your staff.

5:02

And we'll save some time at the end for Q&A because I think we have the opportunity here not only to learn from the presenters who've joined us, but from each other.

5:09

And I think you guys in the chat, I, I welcome you to share throughout the program things that you're doing in your community and then put any Q&A questions you have in that Q&A section of Zoom just so that we can make sure that we catch those because in the chat they may just Zoom.

5:24

Bye, bye.

5:25

Yes, a little bit.

5:26

And then I've put this in bold on the slide because I feel like it's always a very common question in webinars, but the slides will be shared after the program.

5:35

And additionally, I want to put up this slide because if you want to dig into the data a little deeper on your own, the community benchmark report is available for download.

5:45

So we're going to cover the highlights today, but the report itself is 46 pages long and there's a lot of data that goes into different segments and different groups of people that could be running a community based on size or country or age of community.

6:00

So you can take a look at those numbers to put your own numbers into context.

6:04

You kind of look for the cohorts that align with your experience in your community to get a closer read on the numbers that you might see in your community.

6:13

So you can download that at the QR code or I will shortly put the link in the chat.

6:20

But for a little background on the report itself, I will call out that in this report, we pull data from about 1500 associations and nonprofits to see where these community trends are standing and and that's where the data comes from.

6:36

But Georgina shared an interesting tidbit with me before our program today that she actually used this even when she was working on B to B community.

6:45

So if folks have joined from A who are running a B to B community, Georgina, I don't know if you want to jump in there.

6:51

Yeah, absolutely happy to.

6:53

The use case is a little bit different, but depending on what type of B to B or enterprise community you're running, the insights are really relevant.

7:03

So my bread and butter was always communities of practice.

7:07

So people that have the same job but work different places and those even in enterprise context are remarkably similar to the goals and outcomes that association communities have.

7:17

So I found that that overlap was really, really strong for me.

7:23

Now, if you're running a customer support community, then maybe you'll have to do a little bit more translation work on this particular report.

7:32

Yeah, very fair, and I appreciate you.

7:34

Again, it's aimed at association, so that's going to be the closest, the closest comparison.

7:41

But certainly there's probably some things you can borrow.

7:44

So to to dive into the actual data from the report, I'm going to call out a few things that align with what community engagement looks like.

7:51

So in terms of community size, we saw that on average communities had 6600 total users and 9000 users in at least one community.

8:07

And then the median there is a lot smaller.

8:09

You can see there's 9 or excuse me, there's 1400 median total users and 3000 users in at least one community.

8:18

And the reason for that difference is our data set has communities as large as like 200,000 people or as small as 200 people.

8:26

So that average is going to skew up because of the bigger ones.

8:29

That's why we provide both the the average and the median so that you can see a little bit of the breadth of that data.

8:37

And then in terms of the actual engagement benchmarks, we saw that on average communities had 552 monthly logins, 65 contributors, which is about 11% of those total logins and 156 discussion actions in a month.

8:53

The median there is 242 logins, 33 contributors, which is about 13% of the logins and 66 discussion activities.

9:04

So that gives you a look at kind of what you're what we're seeing on average for communities.

9:08

But one of my favorite graphs of the engagement that we see in this report is a graph that we also included last year.

9:16

And this looks like community engagement over time.

9:18

And one of the things I like this graph is because it's kind of boring.

9:23

You're not seeing any huge jumps or any huge dips.

9:26

You're seeing this strong consistent engagement over the last three years from 2023 to 2026.

9:33

And as someone myself who is regularly looking at content, I am often seeing with the rise of AI that website traffic and search results are going down.

9:45

Like you're not seeing as much traffic to your website because now people can ask AI and they may not come to your website for an answer.

9:51

So in comparison to that, seeing that community is really just holding steady shows me that it's still so valuable for your users and for your organization.

10:04

So whoopsie, sharing behind the scenes, scenes slides by accident.

10:10

Y'all gotta look behind the curtain.

10:13

Let me go ahead and stop my share and we can turn it over to the panelists.

10:18

So I would love to ask the panelists a question because I think we often hear people ask us, is my community doing well?

10:28

And the benchmarks that I just put up on the slide, they give you some context.

10:32

But the answer of whether your community is doing well or not depends on who the community serves, its maturity, and what members are there to do.

10:41

So I'd like to ask our panelists, when you assess the health of a community, what do you look at 1st and what can activity, what activity can members miss?

10:54

I'm happy to jump in on that one.

10:56

When we were kind of exploring this as a group, the four of us were starting to talk about, you know, how do you make sure that you are connecting your engagement measures to the community's purpose and the organizational goals.

11:11

So, you know, there's a really big difference between just I had 200 discussion posts this this month in my community, but every single one of them was like, I don't know, somebody's favorite breakfast versus, you know, I had 10.

11:27

But they were all really deeply potent and sharing lessons learned and practical advice that is, that was deeply generous and thoughtful, right?

11:35

And so the quality and the quantity conversation definitely relates to the community's purpose and organizational goals.

11:43

So the way I look at it is that there's a lot of different ways to engage in a community, and some are more or less aligned with the purpose and the organizational goals of why you started your community and what you're hoping that it is going to achieve for your association as well As for your members.

12:02

So I always like to look for the types of activity that lead to the goals or the outcomes.

12:09

So I want to give a couple different examples.

12:13

In a collaborative learning community, for example, a group where everyone is trying to increase their kind of professional ability or training.

12:25

I would probably be looking for people downloading resources from the library or downloading blank templates from the library, right?

12:33

And I'd also be looking at engagement metrics for well, are people uploading completed templates to the discussion as attachments right.

12:42

Like that.

12:43

I would really be looking for it would be less interested in that community for people who were, you know, commenting on a, you know, like preferences of event styles or something like that, right?

13:00

Same thing for in an advocacy or a working group community.

13:03

I'd be looking more at weekly meet up.

13:05

RSVPS are people coming to work on the shared problem and the shared goal and the outcome that the community was designed to support versus in that community.

13:14

Maybe the library downloads are less relevant.

13:16

So volume of activity is always good, but the category of an activity is what shows you the value patterns that line up with the community's purpose and the goal.

13:28

And so I think that sometimes when you're assessing the health of a community, Kelly, what you look at first, those like big headline numbers can sometimes cause you to miss where the alignment is.

13:43

But curious to see what others think too.

13:47

The piggyback that I'll make off of Georgina's comments is if you truly don't know where to start in terms of like what feels like a healthy goal, look at what metrics you already have.

13:58

What is the traffic on your website?

14:00

What is the readership of your blogs?

14:02

How many event attendees do you tend to have?

14:05

So if feeling like saying we want to hit 40% of our reach in the first three weeks of launch feels a little too ambiguous to you, look at where you might already be getting your data and that can help some.

14:18

Set some realistic internal benchmarks as you create this tool.

14:24

Yeah, I love that.

14:25

I think it reinforces that the numbers, again, offer context, but you can't take them out of the full context of what you're actually doing in your community.

14:36

So I before we jump into the next section, I would love to ask folks to answer in the chat.

14:43

Where would you most like to improve your community?

14:47

Would it be getting members to visit or return?

14:53

Would it be encouraging members to contribute?

14:57

Would it be helping questions receive useful answers, or helping members find relevant content?

15:05

Or making community management more manageable?

15:09

Just getting a sense of what folks are most interested to learn about.

15:22

I'm seeing a lot of getting folks to engage, encouraging members to contribute and start discussions.

15:30

Someone said all of the above.

15:31

Not shocked by that.

15:35

One person flagged that they need to organize their library.

15:37

I think that's a really good call out.

15:39

I think sometimes that's something folks will overlook for sure.

15:43

Helping question questions get answers.

15:49

One person said making sure to get that member renewal too, which I think engagement is a huge part of driving those renewals.

15:56

So definitely helpful to look at it in both ways of of yes, you want engagement, but it's not always just for the sake of engagement.

16:04

It's also to drive those outcomes for your members and for your organization.

16:10

So I will dive into the data for the next section, and in this section, we'll be talking about some of those ways to help members participate and return.

16:20

And we looked at the average and median logins, contributors, and discussion activity in the last section.

16:26

But when it comes to encouraging people to login, contribute, or join discussions, one thing to look at in your community is taking a gander at your discussions that don't have replies.

16:38

We did see in the benchmark data that about 62% of discussions in communities, and this is the average.

16:48

Obviously some have more, some have less, but 62% of discussion posts often go without a reply.

16:54

And there may be some discussion posts that don't need a reply, like maybe someone just say giving an update or sharing a webinar or something like that.

17:02

But if you're not taking a look at what's not getting an answer, you might be unintentionally signaling to your community that they won't get an answer if they ask a question there.

17:11

So it's a good thing to take a look at.

17:14

And then another thing I would call out is that your community e-mail digest can actually be a really good tool for driving engagement with your community because then whether or not someone logs in, they can still see the value of the community.

17:30

It might actually trigger them to log in to look a little deeper.

17:33

And that was one of the other pieces that we saw in the data that the community e-mail Digest had really high open rates, 45% for the daily digest on average.

17:44

And 59% for both the daily Consolidated Digest and the weekly Consolidated Digest.

17:50

And as a marketer myself, those open rates are amazing.

17:54

I don't think I saw those types of open rates on any emails I sent.

17:58

And in fact, our 2026 association e-mail benchmark report which we released in February showed that association emails typically have about a 33.5% open rate on average.

18:10

So these far surpassed that and I think that again underscores the value that your community brings to folks, whether they even come on to the community or not.

18:22

So again, before we dive in with the the presenters on some of the their thoughts about those things or thoughts about other ways to drive engagement, I want to invite folks to share in the chat.

18:33

If there's any one thing that you do to keep members engaged or help new community members make their first contributions, I'll look out for a couple of them and then I'll dive right into having our presenters weigh in.

18:49

All right, that might be a harder question to answer.

18:59

So we're not seeing responses come in yet, but please feel free to share in the chat if there's anything that you've found that works really well for driving engagement and I will ask our presenters.

19:10

So with the data I shared, obviously community features like a community digest can help drive engagement, but you still need a strategy to help members discover community, use it comfortably, and keep returning.

19:23

And so I wonder, what strategies would you share to help members know the community exists and feel comfortable using it and getting value from it?

19:32

I think a large part of having your users or members get value from the community is making sure you've asked yourself that question, right?

19:42

So Georgina touched on this a little bit, but what is the community actually being used for and knowing that not each of your segments are going to find value in the same way, so some early stage career folks might find more value in templates.

20:02

Some of your mid stage career folks might need mentors and so they might want to use the directory a little bit more.

20:09

So making sure you ask yourself that question and then lowering the barrier to entry.

20:14

So are we auto subscribing folks to their respective community spaces?

20:20

Are we giving them clear calls to action in those messages?

20:25

And on that member home page, do we have a categorization locked down?

20:33

And even if you don't have it locked down, ask yourself the question, right?

20:36

Like, let's start that thought exercise.

20:38

Even if we don't have topic communities or tags implemented in the community, what are some things we can do?

20:45

Well, give people an example of what they can come to the community to search for, right?

20:49

Assign ribbons to identify people.

20:52

All of those things are going to lower the barrier of entry and just make sure that people convert on whatever that value threshold is way more quickly.

21:05

Perfect.

21:05

I would add that communicating about the community doesn't only live within the community, right?

21:13

So there's a lot of conversation that has to happen internally within your organization and also to your members.

21:21

And that can live in digest, that can live in automation rules, but it can also live in your broader marketing or other organizational communications that you have.

21:31

Most associations I've worked with, community tends to live primarily under the membership or the marketing umbrella.

21:39

So that sometimes can make it a challenge to extend that community communication outside of whatever area you're living in.

21:48

So I think as a community manager, being an advocate to staff on where can community fit is super important.

21:56

And if you can get time at a board meeting, at a staff meeting, wherever that is to kind of tell that story, that's really helpful.

22:05

A few examples could be, do you have a regular newsletter that goes out OK?

22:13

Can we spotlight a community member?

22:15

Can we highlight a top community conversation?

22:18

Can we highlight a question that doesn't have an answer yet where we need people to jump in and participate?

22:26

Also, making sure community has a clear value proposition on your membership pages, on your website, on your committee council chapter pages, if you're using those type of communities.

22:37

And even within publications where I worked, we had a specific section that was basically an ask the community question where we highlighted the community answers.

22:47

And so that's showing up in their print publication that they're receiving on their desk.

22:53

So I think it's really having that bigger conversation with staff on where does community naturally fit into everything that we're already doing and where it can add value.

23:04

Let's make sure it shows up.

23:07

Yeah, I totally agree.

23:08

I will add kind of the the back half of the equation, right?

23:14

Once you get people to know that the community exists and you and you use the awesome strategies that Becca shared on how to get them there and convey the community promise and the promise of the purpose that you have there, then you have to make good on the promise.

23:33

And so I want to really highlight and double tap the 62% of discussions without replies because the promise that we are making to our community members, so many of us as community managers is, hey, come here and you're going to get a really high quality answer.

23:51

You are going to receive feedback from somebody else that understands what you're going through.

23:56

You are going to have this place as a source of information.

24:00

And let's say that some of those 62% are just updates.

24:04

They're not meant to have replies on them.

24:06

They're not questions.

24:07

Let's say 40% of them are questions 40% of the folks that came to your community and we're like, OK, I'm convinced I'm coming.

24:14

I'm going to, I'm going to ask a question you we didn't, we didn't make good on it for him, right.

24:19

So thinking really carefully about that, getting them there is step one, proving to them that they should come back for value is Step 2 and arguably even more important to building long term habits.

24:33

So some strategies that I've used in the past for unanswered replies is you know your community members really well.

24:41

If there's a question hanging out there, let's try to get another community member to answer it.

24:46

You as a community manager can send a quick e-mail to three or four people.

24:50

Hey, this question came in and I think that you probably have a really brilliant answer.

24:53

Could you just go comment on it?

24:55

I think this could be a great connection.

24:56

I'm sure you didn't see it, right?

24:58

A lot of times that moves the needle a lot.

25:00

If that doesn't work, you can ask a staff member who's knowledgeable about it to reply.

25:06

And if they can't do it either, you as the community manager can go in and say hey, didn't find anyone that had the answer to this, but I pulled a few resources for you.

25:15

Here's 3 links, right?

25:16

And so that can really do a lot to just make sure folks know I'm not getting ghosted, I'm not letting, I'm not getting left on read.

25:24

We all feel that way with any kind of site that we spend time on.

25:27

So I do want to highlight that one that's my own personal hill to die on is that unanswered posts can make a huge difference in your community if you start to get that number down.

25:39

Yeah, I appreciate all the strategies each of you shared.

25:42

And it strikes me too that the more you're able to as a community manager, have like a little crew of people, maybe that can even help you even better because then it's not just on you trying to figure out whether those are volunteers or multiple people in the organization, if that's available to you.

25:58

I definitely say loop more people in so that those unanswered threads are not just yours to figure out the answer to by yourself.

26:07

Well, I will dive into the next section.

26:09

So let me just share my screen with some stats.

26:13

So when we're talking about connecting community to the member experience, which is our next section here, the reason that you want to do that is because you to drive community engagement.

26:27

The community itself obviously holds a lot of value, but many organizations see even more positive outcomes when they think about their community as part of the whole experience that their members have with the organization.

26:39

And we see that reflected in the data in the benchmark.

26:43

So I'm I have two main areas I'm going to focus and the first is on higher logics, AI powered features and what we saw from communities who use them.

26:52

And I'm going to explain why that's important.

26:55

So one of the reasons Higher Logic has developed AI features in the community is to make it easier for staff and your members to access and use the resources they're looking for.

27:06

And we saw in this data that communities using bulk upload had 48% higher logins at 28% higher discussion activity and 23% higher contributions, while communities that were using AI suggested tagging had 54% higher logins and 28% higher contributors and discussion activity.

27:28

And I don't want this to seem like magic, like these features alone are not the cause of that higher engagement.

27:35

It's the activity they support and represent that is driving this higher engagement.

27:40

So in your community, when you are putting more resources into the community and you are tagging them so that they are more organized, it's way easier for members to find value in the community because there's more stuff there and it's easier to find.

27:54

So that's one of the cool things about seeing this in the data is we know it's not just.

27:58

So I turned the switch on and suddenly everything was just magically better.

28:03

It's this feature is designed to help improve a experience that someone has when they come to the community.

28:10

The other AI feature I'm going to call out is the community AI Search Assistant.

28:15

Now the data we have for this is prior to Higher Logic releasing the more expanded AI assistant.

28:20

So this is focused on that AI assistant that's purely in community, whereas the expanded AI assistant has access to more of your resources.

28:29

But when we look at Community AI Search Assistant, we see that communities that have this feature enabled saw 48% higher logins, 13% higher discussion activity, and 30% higher contributors.

28:43

And again here, it's the activity that this feature supports that drives the higher engagement.

28:49

It's not magic.

28:50

It's designed to encourage people to behave a certain way.

28:54

So when they're coming to the community, they can ask a question, they can get an exact answer if it exists in the community.

29:01

And the thing I find interesting about this is actually that the discussion activity, the percentage increase was lower than the others.

29:08

And that makes sense to me because if someone can search the community and find the answer that's already there, as opposed to create having to create a new thread because they couldn't find it, you're actually driving more new discussion threads that needed to be new discussion threads.

29:24

And the questions that are already answered, you can kind of mature them.

29:28

Someone might then ping on that same thread from last year.

29:32

Hey, I've discovered this additional piece of information or what have you.

29:36

So that that was just kind of an interesting thing that I feel that that data reinforces and and the other category here, because we talked about the AI features.

29:47

The other category here I want to call out from the data from the report is that connecting your community to other programs also improves engagement.

29:57

So the communities in our data set that have some of higher logic thrives add-ons.

30:02

And I'm not going to get into the specific increases here because there's a lot of them.

30:06

You can definitely dig into it in the report.

30:08

But the add-ons and adding those other programs into the community drive better outcomes for the community as well as those programs.

30:17

Because just like the AI features, it's not a magic wand.

30:21

The reason we see higher engagement here is because of the behaviors that bringing them, the member experience together in one holistic space.

30:29

It makes it easier for people to find things, easier to them, for them to engage in programs, easier for you to maybe manage it because they're all in one place and then you see the resulting higher engagement.

30:40

It also reinforces the social aspect of a lot of the programs that you might run anyway because the community has that strength of giving people a place to talk about things.

30:51

So if they're joining a volunteering or mentoring program or they're part of a chapter and that is tied into the community, they're naturally now having the space to, to start conversations there.

31:02

So I'm going to stop talking now and I'm going to turn it over to the presenters.

31:08

And I would love for them to share how and why association should connect community with other programs and the benefits that members value.

31:19

I can start.

31:20

So one of the analogies you may have heard it cuz we've used it a lot at Higher Logic, or at least I have, is thinking of your community kind of like a town square.

31:30

So people will come, they'll gather, they'll chat with their neighbors, but they're also coming to maybe accomplish something else right when they come into town.

31:39

So if it can be confusing for members when all these different programs live in disparate places and they don't really know where am I actually supposed to go to volunteer?

31:51

Where do I go for events?

31:53

Because it's kind of, it's not all sitting together nicely in your town square.

31:59

So when they come in, we have to think about what else might they be trying to do, right?

32:04

When they log into the community, hopefully they're coming in to join a discussion, but they also might want to learn how to volunteer or mentor or engage with the chapter.

32:13

And if they find those things within the community, then their involvement deepens deepens, right?

32:19

And then you still have higher involvement in the organization and higher retention because they came in and found a way that they could engage.

32:28

And then on the flip side, maybe they log in specifically because they want to attend an event or volunteer for something.

32:36

And while they're there, they see, oh, there's this great conversation going on over here that maybe I want to join.

32:42

So now there's community value added on top of them going in to accomplish whatever task they were looking for.

32:50

One thing I'd suggest that could be worthwhile, especially since we're now using that AI enabled search, it's just taking a look at your search terms report and seeing when are people asking about an event or a program or something that we don't actually have highlighted in our community.

33:10

And would it make sense to bring that into the community somehow?

33:12

Because we actually have the data that shows us that members are coming in and they're asking about this other thing that we might not have immediately associated with community.

33:22

Right.

33:23

And now with the advancements that are coming with that community search, we're more likely to get them to wherever that place is too, as well, which is going to make them more likely to return and search for whatever else they're looking forward.

33:42

Yeah, I love that.

33:44

Any of our other panelists have anything to add before we jump into the next section?

33:51

For those of you in attendance who perhaps are in year one of your community launch, I don't want this side to overwhelm you.

34:02

Certainly there are many different use cases for community as we've seen in the data as we've just talked about with Becca.

34:12

But perhaps your text stack is already a little bit fragmented.

34:16

That's OK.

34:17

We just as a team want to reiterate, if your community is doing one thing, make sure you do it really well.

34:25

And that alludes to Georgina's comment from earlier on.

34:27

If you're going to ask people to contribute, make sure that is being rewarded in whatever way that looks right.

34:33

Whether it's a thank you or you're answering people's threads or you're doing a highlight right there.

34:39

There is a The thing is that there is a place for everyone in community and if community is only going to serve a purpose with capital P, make sure it serves that purpose really well.

34:56

Yeah, great call outs.

34:58

Thank you all for diving into that question.

35:01

So in this section I'm going to share my screen again because I have a little more data to share.

35:08

In this section, we're going to talk a little more about some of the tactical components of making

community easier to manage and, and making engagement happen a bit more because I think we've touched on some of those pieces, but there's a little room to to keep talking about that.

35:24

So in terms of the data in our report, we can measure from folks who use online communities where whether they're seeing improved engagement when they're using automation rules and gamification.

35:37

And so I want to call out here that they do see improvement.

35:41

I think we've had webinars before where we've called this out and and reiterated that the juice is worth the squeeze.

35:48

These tools are designed, again, to help reinforce behaviors that we have seen in the data or seen in our experience with communities that drive better engagement.

35:57

And I think for some teams, gamification at least.

36:00

I've had people ask me questions where they're like, well, do adults really need things gamified?

36:05

And to that, I would say, yes, they do It's it's funny, we see it in the data.

36:10

We see it in apps like Duolingo and things like that.

36:13

People like to have their participation recognized.

36:16

And you don't have to make it feel like super childish.

36:20

I think you can make it feel very relevant to the experience they're having with your organization.

36:26

But it does make a difference recognizing how people are engaging and reinforcing that behavior that you want to see.

36:33

So I actually have less data to yap about in this section.

36:37

I'm going to turn it over to the presenters and ask them to chat about some of the ways that they would recommend driving engagement, including if an organization has limited time, how might you advise them to focus their time?

36:57

Like is there any particular way you would tell them to decide which parts of community to focus on or improve and, and how to do that?

37:08

This is one that I think about a lot, so I'm happy to jump in and chat a little bit more about this topic.

37:14

I think that there's a couple things that happen when we're managing communities and we feel so strongly about making them as as amazing as they possibly can be.

37:26

And is that the community can do a million different things to create value.

37:30

It can do a million different things to support your members.

37:35

It's like a Swiss Army knife like that, right?

37:37

But most communities have one or two activities that do 90% of the heavy lifting of generating value, right?

37:46

And so just because you can doesn't mean you have to or that you should, right?

37:50

So you want to focus on your All Stars.

37:52

You want to focus on the couple activities that are really moving the needle the most.

37:58

People get a little daunted when trying to identify like, OK, but what are they, Like, I don't have the data.

38:03

How do I figure it out?

38:04

Like, what program does move the needle?

38:05

I don't really know.

38:07

And a, a trick for this that's really pretty straightforward is think about your ideal member experience through the lens of your MVP members, right?

38:15

Every community manager who's in there on a regular basis can think of, I don't know, four or five members of your community where you're like, gang, wish I had 20 of you, wish I had 100 of you, right?

38:26

Like who are those MVP members that are really doing a tremendous amount to support the community and just deconstruct what they do?

38:35

Do they show up to events?

38:36

Are they welcoming newbies in welcome threads?

38:39

Are they posting examples in your library?

38:41

Like whatever it is that they are doing and that's driving so much value for everybody else.

38:47

Great.

38:47

Now you have your strategy.

38:49

Focus around that and it doesn't have to be any more complicated than that, right?

38:53

That's a good place to start, especially if you're in this place where you're like, I'm just overwhelmed.

38:57

I don't even know where to prioritize.

39:00

So find the one or two things that really work and then help everyone else start doing more of those things and make the barriers to doing those things as low as you can possibly go for everybody else, right?

39:18

Just make it super easy for them.

39:21

The flip side of that, right?

39:23

And Kelly is talking about kind of the like, you know, you have to make sure that members are finding value, but you're also making sure that the staff, like logistically is able to support the community.

39:35

Everyone is going to be like, OK, but there's still maintenance work, Georgina.

39:38

Like even if I focus on, you know, two programs like events and a workout loud thread, I still have, you know, someone still has to answer the password reset emails.

39:48

Someone has to encourage people to upload profile pictures, Someone has to curate the library content, right?

39:54

Those are the areas that you should use automation and AI tools to tackle, right?

39:59

Those are the areas where not only will your members not mind that you're supplementing your hands on effort, they'll really appreciate it because then they get their answers faster and they get more time talking to you about the stuff that really matters to them, right?

40:12

So.

40:13

Use your automation rules really liberally.

40:16

You know, definitely use them to encourage your members to take the actions you know support them, right?

40:24

Automation rules for adding profile pictures, for logging in after X number of days of absence.

40:30

They haven't been, they haven't visited you in a while to celebrate anniversaries or to gamify milestones, things like that.

40:36

Really great uses for your automation.

40:40

And then a product that I work on or a feature that I work on really regularly is our AI assistant, right?

40:47

And so I have to recommend that to both increase the findability of resources and also decrease the administrative requests in your inbox, right?

40:58

So it's really a win win for everyone.

41:03

I think the, the SparkNotes version of that is where are the friction points?

41:09

Like Georgina just gave so many examples.

41:12

And some of those examples are going to be owned by the certain people or departments as Becca also alluded to before, right?

41:20

So let's say you have, and I hope it's one of those things like what you put into it is what you get out of it.

41:27

But let's just say you only have an hour a week to work in community because you're wearing a lot of different hats.

41:38

It's the friction points, right?

41:39

And that's what Georgina is talking about.

41:41

Is it new member onboarding?

41:43

Is it cycle renewals?

41:46

Is it event registrations?

41:48

And so when you think to yourself, what should I be spending my time on?

41:53

What are those pains to relieve or gains to achieve that you can reasonably work on for an hour a week?

42:02

We hope it's more here at higher logic, but we do understand that, you know, time is not always as liberal with our community management as we would like sometimes.

42:11

So where are those friction points?

42:14

And this is actually, I'll, I'll tout one of the higher logic events and programming is the Ask the advisor sessions that we host on hug.

42:24

We have started hosting them every month and they're just half an hour of time with some of our advisors.

42:28

And so that's a great way to brainstorm with a higher logic advisor like Becca or myself to say, Aaron, we want to make the directory more usable.

42:39

How do we do that?

42:40

And I say, well, let's get some demographics pulled in and we add some demographic filters to to your directory and people can search for each other and network a lot more easily, right?

42:48

Very concrete way to get increased value in a very concrete way in a concrete amount of time.

42:54

So what are those friction points?

42:57

And if you only have an hour, pick a friction point and and run with it.

43:03

So this is kind of reiterating both what Georgina and Aaron said, but I like to think of it in terms of a member journey.

43:11

So if you're thinking about somebody who's on the board of directors, right?

43:15

Like what are all those little steps that they had to take that got them all the way up to now?

43:22

I'm like serving at a high level, right?

43:25

So maybe even talking to one of those people and say, hey, what were the points that like were a big pivot point for you that got you more involved, right?

43:34

And then we can think about, OK, are some of these things that we could automate a message that we could that we can kind of identify within the platform as, oh, this might be a pivot point for them.

43:46

So let's make sure we can help them get over any barriers to do that thing, whether it's making their first post and getting a good response or maybe they find a volunteer opportunity.

43:59

That's just a small micro opportunity, but it moves them up to where, OK, I am engaging and giving back.

44:07

And now maybe we might want to ask them if they want to be a mentor, let's say if we have a mentoring program.

44:12

So kind of figuring out what those key points are in the member journey and making sure we focus on those points as somewhere where we want to help people get to whatever that next step is.

44:24

And if we can automate it, all the better.

44:31

Yeah, excellent.

44:33

Well, I, we have time reserved at the end for Q&A.

44:36

So if folks have questions that they would like the panelists to dive into, please put them in the Q&A section of Zoom and I will ask those of the panelists.

44:47

But in the meantime, I wonder if there's anything the panelists would call out.

44:53

I have like 2 broad questions that I would love to ask you to weigh in on, and you can choose one or the other.

44:59

Choose your own adventure.

45:00

One question you could choose to answer would be what's one thing our attendees could try in the next 30 days and how they would then know it would that it had helped the community.

45:12

The other question is just if there's anything we didn't cover when we were talking about community that you have a burning desire to share.

45:25

Maybe I need to.

45:26

It's hard when you give people a totally open-ended question.

45:31

I can dive in.

45:32

There was one thing that we didn't get to earlier in the presentation, kind of talking about who are those members that are really only engaging for now, like by opening an e-mail digest.

45:45

And it's kind of The thing is that they could be gaining a lot of value from your community, right?

45:53

Even though they're not logging in, they're not making a post yet, right?

45:59

But if they have that awareness that they're getting value from the conversations that are happening, if they're finding resources, if they're consuming blogs, whatever that is, that might be public, that's still high value.

46:13

So I think we have to always kind of think about our members getting value.

46:19

And sometimes them getting value doesn't mean that they logged in and contributed to a discussion.

46:24

But our hope is now community is going to be top of mind for them, right?

46:28

Because they see all this value that's happening and they might not have something urgent all the time that they're like, oh, I really need answers on this thing.

46:38

But if something comes up where they're like, oh, actually I really need an answer on this thing now because they've gotten so much value just consuming, they might be more likely now to say, no, actually that's I should ask the community that, right?

46:53

So I think we can bring that value question a little bit broader than some of the things that we can see and track more easily.

47:03

The data suggests that anywhere between 65 to 85% of your user base or your member base will be consumers, lurkers, learners, right, whichever nomenclature you want to use.

47:21

But that implies that they are subscribed to their community, that they're opening their digests, that they're following a thread, that they've liked a thread, that they've downloaded a resource.

47:31

So at the beginning of this webinar, when all of you said we want them to engage more, that is engagement and Higher Logic has the reports to capture those things.

47:43

And so when we say, I think when I hear we want our members to engage more, what I'm really hearing in between the lines is we want more people to post.

47:52

But in the scope of content overload and AI tools making it easier to source answer from existing content, I think we're just naturally going to see a decline in active contributorship.

48:11

To Becca's point, there are going to be trigger points when people are ready to contribute, when they've changed jobs, when they go to an event, when they become a speaker, when they've gained A certification.

48:21

So when we as a higher logic team here, we want our people to engage more.

48:28

Let's look at the ways that people are actually already getting value to Becca's point, capture those.

48:33

And then to Georgina's point of what are those super users doing?

48:38

How can we start small to convert a smaller number of those consumers to contributors and then scale that for success without feeling like we are constantly trying to engage the same 10/20/30 members for volunteer spots, for community management's, for volunteer moderating, right?

48:59

So don't forget that engagement can look like consumer ship and we want that large portion of users to be the strongest consumers that they can be.

49:12

There is a question in the chat that I'm going to pivot our conversation a little bit to address.

49:19

Taffy is asking for any tips on how to get your staff more involved in supporting community.

49:25

And so this is a topic that I think is relevant to a lot of folks and a lot of people think about and kind of get their head around because and Taffy, you can give more detail if you want, but because we just have this kind of broad question, I'm going to zoom us out just just a little bit.

49:44

I think that sometimes when we say I want my staff more involved in supporting community, we mean we want them participating in the community.

49:51

We want them to make posts in the community.

49:53

But that is one type of support for your community that is not all the different ways that they could support the community, right?

50:01

So Becca was talking earlier about can you have community featured in a newsletter?

50:05

Can some of the marketing and awareness functions and the membership functions of your team help support awareness of what's happening in the community?

50:13

It can your events team make community connections?

50:17

And when a discussion comes up at a live event, say, oh, we were just having this discussion in the community, you should join to continue the conversation there, right?

50:25

Like all of these other programs are really great ways for getting your staff more involved in supporting community.

50:33

And then when we're talking about actually diving in and posting in the community, contributing to the community, I would also encourage all of us to take a step back and say why.

50:48

What is the why do you want them to do that?

50:50

Are you just looking for more engagement?

50:52

You're looking for volume?

50:53

Or do you have staff on the team who are subject matter expertise in the particular area that your community focuses on and you want them to help answer questions?

51:02

Or are you just drowning in like password reset requests that are ending up on the feed and you need someone to jump in and help you get really targeted about specifically what value the staff is going to add by posting and contributing in the community, if that's what you're looking for.

51:19

Because in my experience, members come to communities to hear from other members.

51:25

They know how to contact your staff and their preference is for other members, right?

51:29

Most of the time.

51:30

There's always exceptions, so it's it doesn't always behoove us to fill our community feeds with staff contributions only.

51:40

We want a nice varied mix.

51:42

And then finally, my last piece of or my last suggestion about this is, yes, the best way to get your staff more involved in supporting community is explaining to them why supporting the community will help them do their job.

51:59

You know, it's the what's in it for me question.

52:02

Treat them like a customer.

52:03

Don't expect the other staff members, don't expect your teammates to do that mental translation work.

52:08

Do it for them.

52:09

Think about, Hey, here's how the community can support all of your goals.

52:12

What are the what are the worries and the challenges and the barriers that keep that person up at night?

52:18

What do they go home stressing about?

52:19

What do they think about over dinner?

52:21

Can the community solve that problem, even just a little bit?

52:24

Present that to them as an option.

52:26

Hey, I thought the community might help solve X challenge you were just talking about in the staff meeting last week.

52:31

What do you think?

52:31

Let's do it together, right.

52:33

So that's what I would say on that one real quick.

52:36

Yeah, I haven't.

52:38

I'm sorry.

52:38

Go ahead, Becca.

52:39

No, I had a group I worked with that we really kind of systemized that process that Georgina is talking about.

52:45

So once a year we'd send a survey to staff members who were kind of owners of different parts of the business, right.

52:54

And the questions were like, what she's saying, what are you working on?

52:57

What are your goals this year?

52:59

What are your challenges?

53:01

Do you see how community could help you with XYZ?

53:05

Sometimes they're like, I don't know, you tell me, you know, but then we could all hop on a meeting and talk through here's what community is doing.

53:13

And based on the goals that you have, here are some opportunities and it invites A broader conversation.

53:20

And we only really did it once a year, but it's still kind of helped keep community top of mind and help address goals that different staff members might have.

53:32

Yeah, I have two things to add to that.

53:34

And then I'll ask one of the other questions I saw in the chat.

53:37

1 is that on the Member Engagement Show podcast that I host, I had a guest, Stephanie Kusabab, who also positioned how being the community manager puts you in a really good place to be the voice of the member.

53:50

You have access to a lot of things that like members are talking about or that they care about.

53:54

And sometimes by raising those in staff meetings or with your peers and colleagues in different departments, they start realizing what they could gain from the community even if they were just lurking.

54:07

Like even if they just went in there and saw, what are the questions people are always asking?

54:11

And in that vein, I recall at my former association that our event staff, eventually the community manager helped them to realize that if they would have a community that hosted the program materials from an event, it automatically brought people into the community where they might not have thought to use it, which the event staff didn't care about as much.

54:36

But then any follow up conversations that were happening about the event happened there where we can see it versus them maybe like connecting with each other on LinkedIn separately, where now we have no idea what they're talking about after we by by putting event materials and driving discussion after an event into the community.

54:55

We both we're able to drive engagement in the community, but also learn from what people talked about after the event and sometimes times identify follow up event opportunities because the people would be like, Oh, I really wish the session went into more detail about XYZ thing.

55:10

And then we were, we, we realized, Oh, well, it could, we could have a session that dives into those more deeply.

55:18

The question in the chat that I wanted to pose was someone asked about anonymous posts and whether any of you have thoughts about allowing them in the community there.

55:26

This person's Darlene, her organization is seeing a high volume of anonymous posts.

55:31

And so they've been discussing feedback about maybe limiting them.

55:34

And I'd love to hear recommendations for handling that.

55:40

Hi, Darlene, great question.

55:44

Maybe you and I can chat more about this, but I don't know that there's a good answer.

55:50

Instead of prescribing what I assume you know as an answer that you want, I would I would probably respond with more questions.

55:59

The first being, how are you setting community guidelines and expectations in your terms and conditions?

56:08

That's a huge level set for your members on how to behave within the community.

56:16

There are certain instances where community posts from anonymous users make the community feel more safe.

56:25

And some communities where anonymous posting makes users feel less safe because there's less accountability perhaps for who is posting.

56:33

So there's not in my mind.

56:35

And Becca and Georgina, please feel free to combat this hot take.

56:39

Perhaps I don't know that there's a good answer.

56:45

The thing that I would probably say the most is we would need to dive into that together, right?

56:53

Is it a certain user segment that doesn't necessarily feel safe?

56:56

Is this is it a certain topic area?

57:00

Do those threads continue to go answered or unresponded to?

57:05

And who is responding to those posts as folks who are probably managers?

57:12

And I realize we're getting really short on time, so I will actually cut myself off.

57:16

But I would say instead of prescribing an answer of is it good or is it bad?

57:19

It's it's neutral.

57:21

And let's just get a little bit more curious about why this is happening.

57:24

And if we don't know why this is happening, keep asking the questions to get even just more data that we can make a decision about anonymous posting around.

57:33

Yeah, I don't have a different perspective to add because I think that Aaron has hit the nail on the head here.

57:38

I think this is totally the right approach.

57:40

I'll give you an example of a community that I previously managed.

57:44

We had one particular community group that was about career advice.

57:49

Much of the advice was like, hey, I have this really crummy boss, I don't know what to do.

57:54

And the boss would be in the group also cause the entire organization would join the community.

57:59

That was a scenario where we allowed anonymous posting because it was sensitive.

58:03

There was risk there and it was either post anonymously or do not make that post at all and don't receive the feedback.

58:10

We allowed it in that group.

58:12

The other groups we did not allow it in, right.

58:14

And we were very specific about that at the top of the group.

58:17

Hey, this particular group has anonymous is posting in it, right.

58:20

So there's always ways to split the difference and it doesn't have to be an all or nothing.

58:27

Yeah, absolutely.

58:29

Well, I'm sad that we've reached the end of our time together because I am sure that we could have.

58:36

And Aaron and Georgina cover tons more stuff.

58:40

So if you, if anyone wants to connect with them offline, I think we're all on LinkedIn.

58:45

That's always good.

58:46

You can reach out to Higher Logic if you have questions about products or questions for us that you want us to follow up on, we can totally do that.

58:53

I'm definitely going to be diving into the chat and seeing if there's anything that we can create follow up content around.

59:00

We will also share the slides after today's presentation, so keep an eye out for that.

59:04

It usually just takes us a few business days to get those out.

59:08

And if you want to look at the data in more detail, again, it's 46 pages long, so we've only scraped the surface of it.

59:15

You can download that.

59:16

I will put the link in the chat here.

59:19

Just a second and otherwise you can use the QR code.

59:24

So thank you to our attendees for joining us today.

59:28

Thank you so much to Aaron, Georgina and Rebecca.

59:31

They are really the experts here.

59:32

I get to look at the data, but I don't often get to work hands on with community.

59:37

So they really brought the they brought their deep expertise to this session today.

59:45

Thanks everybody.

59:45

Nice hanging out with you.

59:48

Bye.

59:48

You're out.

59:49
Bye.