

Increasing Community Engagement



MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Of the millions of monthly visitors to Stack Overflow, around 1% contribute in a significant way.

- ✔ Not everyone will contribute and that is okay and expected
- ✔ Participation in Stack Overflow Enterprise communities follows the “10-30-60 Rule”, 10% are active, 30% are moderate & 60% just lurk
- ✔ Number of active contributors is not the ultimate success criteria, it is growth in overall usage and content
- ✔ Increasing engagement requires finding your internal fans & communicating the WIIFM (“What’s In It For Me”) for the rest

SET THE RIGHT FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Employing these strategies allows you to build trust in the community and content, create more value for users over time, and spark organic growth so that the community is self-sustaining.

- ✔ **Identify the most impactful uses.** Not every group or area is equal when it comes to a good starting point. Consider groups or functions where there is a lot of repetitive questions, a lot of new information or change occurring, or / and rapid growth in staff.
- ✔ **Start with your fans.** It is critical to get your fans on board from the start. They will set the community standards, the bar for question quality, and the types of content that is valid on the site. And most importantly, they will be the early and most active contributors that build momentum for adoption.
- ✔ **Build the market.** Any user generated content engine is essentially a two-sided market with “sellers” of knowledge who contribute content and “buyers” of knowledge that seek answers. Therefore you need a mix of people involved in the community from subject matter experts to new employees in order to create enough “liquidity” of questions & answers and moderators to help enforce the “rules” of the community.

7 WAYS TO GROW ENGAGEMENT

- 1 Create value up front.**

It is much easier for people to get involved when there is a starting point. That is why we strongly suggest adding 100 questions and answers from the very beginning that comprise the most commonly asked questions.
- 2 Make it easier to contribute.**

The lower the barrier, the more willing users will be to engage. That is why it really is critical to introduce email notifications and chat integration early on, so that Stack Overflow is immediately in the workflow of users and easy to participate.
- 3 Rally your internal fans.**

There are users that will immediately get excited by the introduction of Stack Overflow, either because they are regular users or they see how it would ease their own workloads of answering questions repeatedly.
- 4 Promote quality contributions.**

Recognize all good content and active contributors. The improved newsletter functionality in Stack Overflow Enterprise is one method, but other channels should be regularly used like intranets / collaboration platforms, chat apps, company webinars, lunch & learns, internal tech events. Do not be afraid of over-communicating.
- 5 Reward — but don't over-reward — participants.**

The easiest and best means of rewarding community members is through recognition. Being recognized through badges and reputation points in Stack Overflow is helpful, but also use additional channels and methods to reward active contributors. Contests, giving out swag, free passes to tech events are just a few ideas.
- 6 Integrate into training.**

Having new employees get an introduction and training on Stack Overflow from the start of their onboarding is both an easy way to get questions, and an excellent way to indoctrinate usage from the start.
- 7 Encourage support from leadership.**

Seeing IT leaders both talk about and using Stack Overflow will give users encouragement that participating in the community is seen as a positive activity blessed by management and company as a core value.

REFERENCES

[The 90-9-1 Rule of Communities](https://medium.com/@devbizops/the-90-9-1-rule-of-communities-11b858f19977) — explains why it is okay that not everyone contributes content in a community (https://medium.com/@devbizops/the-90-9-1-rule-of-communities-11b858f19977)

[The 50-500-5000 Principle](https://medium.com/@devbizops/the-50-500-5000-principle-b5b790c1c1f7) — discusses the mechanisms on strategically scaling an online community for long-term engagement (https://medium.com/@devbizops/the-50-500-5000-principle-b5b790c1c1f7)

[Can I Launch a Developer Community?](https://medium.com/@devbizops/can-i-launch-a-developer-community-36ad7f507687) — talks about the cultural challenges and opportunities in creating an online community (https://medium.com/@devbizops/can-i-launch-a-developer-community-36ad7f507687)