

Building Fans, a Tribe and a Community for your business

A BizQuack Education Presentation



Business is always in a state of flux, there have always been issues that have directly affected small business growth. In my opinion, the issues confronting us today are far more serious and have a much broader reach than just our ability to successfully grow a small business. Let's look at a few of the recent happenings that are disrupting businesses and perhaps endangering our American way of life.



Covid: Although many of the problems confronting us now are blamed on the Covid pandemic, the pandemic itself just sped up other festering problems. The pandemic itself resulting in the following:

- Fear of getting the virus.
- Fear of the vaccine
- Small businesses closing due to restrictive government mandates
- Customers not frequenting business establishments
- On-line education for children
- Working from home

Free Money: Stimulus checks, perhaps a needed commodity had the adverse effect of discouraging people from working. This was compounded by large unemployment benefits that made it possible for many to live off the “Government support” instead of going back to work.



Bigger firms getting bigger: Large companies such as Amazon and Walmart answered the consumers' needs due to the pandemic restrictions with on-line orders and home delivery that small businesses could not always provide.

Rising wages: The competition for workers has caused wages to increase thus putting a strain on small businesses operating budgets.

Illegal immigration: An influx of approx. one million people that will need education, housing, and medical support will put a bigger burden on our tax dollars.

Education system: Our education system is failing our children. Giving everyone a passing grade so no one is offended or distorting our past and replacing it with a made-up scenario.

Loss of faith in part of our government leadership.



It hasn't been all doom and gloom. Let's take a look at a few positive indicators.

- Real Estate Values are up
- Construction is up
- There are plenty of jobs for those willing to work
- Stock Market is up.

I am not going to predict the future, but I do believe that change is the only constant in both our personal and business lives. This session is one that can help you solidify your business foundation and provide a solid base upon which to grow.

In addition to these “non-controllable” issues there are the everyday controllable issues that small business owners face while growing their business, such as:

- Customer retention
- Competition
- Customer acquisition

This session focusses on one possible solution to the items we can control.



Let's start off with definitions of the three words I used in the title of this session:

Seth Godin wrote a book called **Tribes**. The following is his definition: A tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea.

- He went on to say that “Human beings can't help it: we need to belong. One of the most powerful of our survival mechanisms is to be part of a **tribe**, to contribute to (and take from) a group of like-minded people. We are drawn to leaders and to their ideas, and we can't resist the rush of belonging and the thrill of the new.”



In his latest book David Meerman Scott introduced the term **Fanocracy**. His act of consciously bringing people together through a shared endeavor; an organization that honors fans and consciously fosters meaningful connections among them.

- “A true **fanocracy** mobilizes people to think, feel, and act together with a helpful, positive force during difficult times.”
- “Building connections to like-minded people leads to success in our business and joy in our heart.”
- “The relationships we build with our customers are more important than the products and services we sell to them.”



In 1986 David McMillan and David Chavis described a **community** as follows: “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.”

- “There are four factors that contribute to a sense of **community**: membership, influence, integration/fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.”
 - **Membership:** (five attributes)
 - **Boundaries:** How do people become members, and what are the boundaries keeping others out?
 - **Emotional safety:** By building boundaries and including the right people, you create trust and a feeling of safety.
 - **A sense of belonging and identification.** Members must feel like they fit in and that this is “their community.”
 - **Personal investment:** if members contribute or make sacrifices to the community, it enhances their sense of community.
 - **A common symbol system.** Sharing a symbol like a sports team jersey or a brand logo creates a sense of community.



Influence: Members must feel like they have influence over the community and the community having influence over the members.

- **Influence** also speaks to the concept of giving first before asking for anything. The BizQuack term, Giveworking.
- It's important to create an environment in a community where members feel like they have a say in what happens.

○ **Integration and Fulfillment of Needs:**

- By joining a community, members get what they hoped to get by joining.
- The delivery of your value proposition and the keeping of your promise.

○ **Shared Emotional Connection**

- Community members will have a history of experiences together and the belief that there will be more experiences together in the future.



There are two things that every community formation should focus on:

- **How it creates value, belonging and emotional safety for participants**
- **How it creates value and measurable results for the business.**



This overview with definition of the words used in our title also gave us an insight as to how to form a community and what we can expect.

Before we look at the HOW in more detail let's look at the main benefits a community can provide for your small business.

- Retention
 - Fosters brand loyalty
- Referrals (Advocates)
- Better communication with your customers
- Receive valuable feedback
- Marketing is cost-effective (because it is directed (focused))
- Improves web traffic
- Gains brand visibility
- Increased trust in your brand
- Paves the way for launching new products and services.



Tools you will need to start building a community around your business

- A websites that fits the profile of your target market (community)
- A brand (logo, tag line, etc.)
- Have (create) mind-boggling customer service – continuously striving to exceed customer expectations
- Data base and communications system (example- Constant Contact)
- Willingness to use the three community touch methods – In Person, Print, and On-line
- Patience to persevere – developing a community is hard work and it does not appear overnight.
- A personal commitment and desire to grow your business
- A willingness to step out of your comfort zone to learn and try new things



Defining community expectations

Like a community of fans at a sporting event, all enjoy being there but offer different levels of participation. From the excited fan that stands for most of the game and cheers the team in a loud voice to the quiet fan that is happy to just watch the game, eat popcorn and be surrounded by a community that shares the same interest.

Your business community will have many different fans, all supporters but with different levels of involvement. It's important to recognize that the common thread is not the degree of their involvement, but the benefits of your value proposition and that of a welcoming and safe community.

The primary requirement for belonging to your business community is a belief in your product/service either as a user or a referral source.



How to build a community for business

People want to associate themselves with like-minded people or brands. If you want them to align with your brand, you must be clear about what your brand stands for.

All growth and marketing efforts must be built upon a solid foundation. We believe that the first 8 steps, the foundation part of the BizQuack Vision Based Business Plan is essential.

- The Vision
- The Why
- The detailed description of the product/service
- The target market identification & validation
- The value proposition
- The promise
- The delivery

Creating a one sheet flyer, outlining these points and making it available to your website and as a handout, will go a long way towards building a strong community



Be serious about community building

Having customers or projects and support of friends and family does not automatically create a community. You must consistently seek out people and bring them together.

A communication forum is essential for community growth. A forum provides a place for you to share your information and for others to participate. It also allows the community at large to share what they like about your product/service and perhaps suggest ways to improve it.

The bottom line is the building of a trust relationship not only between you and the community at large but also for the members of the community with each other.



Valuable rewards are needed

One reason people enjoy belonging to a community are the rewards. No rewards don't have to be financial; they can also be intrinsic.

You should decide what kind of rewards structure you want to offer to your community. Possibilities include:

- Always be clear about how much you appreciate their feedback and participation.
- A touch either on-line or snail mail when referrals are received or when a community member shows exemplary participation.
- A possible discount on your product/service
- As your community grows and your bottom line follows, it may be time to share a small token of your appreciation.



Empower your members

People generally enjoy being in leadership positions. I know of one business community that meets, in person, on a regular basis and the owner empowered the members to run the meeting. It is one of the best examples of community empowerment I have ever seen.

People in leadership are more likely to share information about your business. They can be in charge of inviting others to your community or handle special events for the community.



Welcoming community members

How you treat new community members within the first 30 to 60 days will determine whether they remain. For small businesses, customer retention is the holy grail. Increasing customer retention can boost profits by as much as 25% - 95%, according to Bain researchers.



Thoughts

Before we work on a community development action plan I want to repeat/share a few things:

- Give it time: “it’s a long game to build community around your brand, but it creates an authentic long-lasting connection between your brand and customers.” If you are in a rush, people can sense that. Growing slowly will help you in the long run.
- Embrace a social cause: Having a social impact that helps the larger community can be very effective. If part of each sale is donated to people in need, you are supporting a larger community while also building community around your brand.
- Education: create educational blogs, videos and e-mails. This is important because you are giving and not selling.



The How to.

First - define who you want as members:

- Let's start off by establishing some boundaries:
 - Because you are the head of your community and building trust, first with you and then the rest of the community, ethics becomes the core of membership requirements.
 - We will use the following definition for our base line:
“Someone who is honest and follows good moral standards. Ethical comes from the Greek ethos “moral character” and describes a person or behavior as right in the moral sense – truthful, fair and honest.”
- With this as a core requirement, let's look at our ideal community members.
 - Current and past customers
 - Current and past referral partners
 - Future customers and referral partners.



I need to insert a caveat at this point. Just because you have people that have the potential to become community members, by adding their names as community members does not mean you now have reached your goal.

Building a community is not an overnight process. I recommend the following preparation (in addition to the tools we discussed earlier)

- Create a one-page flyer (brochure) listing the benefits to the community members. See below and add your own.
 - Education
 - Networking with like-minded people
 - Save money
 - Belonging
 - Have a say in the community
 - Enjoy two-way conversations with other members
 - Exclusivity, not an open community



- Have possible involvement opportunities for those that wish to participate. This is not to be handed out to everyone it will be used after the community has gained traction.
- Have your onboarding “welcoming” process defined and written out for consistency.
- Develop a membership information sheet.
- Have at least one month of member communication developed:
 - Blogs
 - Newsletters
 - Videos
 - Education sessions
- Be prepared to explain the need for the formation of a business community
- Strongly recommend that the first 10 members should be individually selected and personally invited.
 - Obtain permission to use their names and companies in your marketing effort. It will give them prestige and create new business opportunities.
 - Get them involved in the growth of the community.



Within the People Management System, we had four categories and they each received a different level of outreach.

- Soldiers
- Supporters
- Familiars
- Potential

In our business community there is only one group, and they all receive the same benefits.



Putting work clothes on a system

Let's examine, in a little more detail how we implement the Community building process. We defined three categories as a source of members in our community:

- Current and Past Customers
- Current and past referral sources
- Future customers and referral partners.

Just because you have a data base, it does not mean that everyone in your data base is automatically a community members.

The goal is to make members feel special and invited to become members. Eventually they will call you and ask to join. Members will also help in the invitation process.

With this new community formation plan, you have a story to share. Reach out to past customers and send them a "I am sorry letter" (call me for an example)

New customer and new referral sources are extended a personal invitation to join.

It's important that you develop your own personalized invitation process.



