



Debunking the Six Myths of Brand-Owned Consumer Communities

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Intro

Brand-owned consumer communities are a proven strategy for driving engagement, fostering loyal one-to-one relationships, yielding strategic insights, and growing brand share. Are you still on the fence about getting one started for your business? Let's work through some of the misconceptions that might still be holding marketers like you back.

Myth 1

Who needs a community when I've already got a Facebook page and a CRM?



For many years, marketers have turned to Facebook and other social networks as a gateway to building direct consumer relationships. In reality, the social media network is a gatekeeper. That community of fans you've worked so hard to build is now only reachable through advertising. Those groups, along with their data, behavior, and preferences, belong to the social networks, not your brand.

Okay, so we can agree social networks are probably not the best place for relationship building, but what about CRMs? After all, CRMs are owned by the brand! Surely they're the best place for relationship building, right? Unfortunately, the vast majority of marketers have watched their CRM system become a "database desert" where they can't figure out what to do with consumers beyond pushing out one-way messages via email. These platforms are sadly limited in actually engaging and activating consumers.

In contrast, a brand-owned community is valuable because it's not only a database that you control, but also a conduit for actual two-way interaction. It bridges the gap between CRM and social. This direct, frictionless communication builds loyalty among your most passionate consumers.

Myth 2

Brand communities are only for lifestyle brands



Successful communities thrive when there's a defined mission to which consumers are drawn. It's about selling a purpose, not a product. While this might seem easy for a lifestyle brand because the lifestyle is often the apparent purpose, many companies, regardless of category, can have success rallying consumers around value proposition. Developing a documented and dedicated community engagement strategy is a step any brand can deploy, and it starts with isolating the aspiration that connects the consumer's life with the brand.

Consumers who believe in your brand and what it stands for will naturally start talking about it. Above all, it's about authenticity. It's not just about telling a story about who you are as a brand. It's about empowering people to tell the story of who they are and what they stand for and how the brand fits in their life.

Myth 3

It's like throwing a party, and no one shows up



A marketer's worst fear is spending time and resources on a strategy that gains no real traction with consumers. Your advocates will join and engage if they connect with the community's value proposition and if they continually feel rewarded and spotlighted for their active engagement and loyalty. Every communication or "ask" from the community should be a value exchange for both brand and consumer—whether it's a brand experience, exclusive content, a chance to have their voice heard, or the opportunity to be the "in-the-know" person of their social group.

A vibrant, active community begets activity. Community members who enjoy meaningful experiences will themselves become the biggest referral engine for the group. Additionally, marketers who have the most community success make sure that the community is part of the brand's DNA—member recruitment, acquisition and retention is baked into all of their marketing properties.

Myth 4

Communities are so much work—you have to engage with members every single day



Quality over quantity is a guiding principle when it comes to brand communities. Brand enthusiasts don't need to be engaged every day. Adhering to the belief that success hinges on interaction frequency puts marketers on a slippery slope toward overwhelmed, overworked, and drained resources. Instead, focus on how members behave while in your community and the impact they have on others.

- Do they share when asked?
- Do they drive action among their friends?
- Do they complete surveys when offered?
- Do they engage with activities?

An experienced consumer engagement partner should bring a proven approach to prompting enthusiastic participation through a robust selection of meaningful activations.

Myth 5

You need to be a trailblazer, do a lot of learning yourself and start from scratch



When you build a brand community, yes, you will be trailblazing a highly effective marketing strategy for your brand. But the good news is you no longer have to bear the exhaustive effort to build a platform from scratch, suffer the difficult trial-and-error period, or expend resources to continually evolve it to keep up with technology and consumer behavior. Instead, you can stand on the shoulders of other marketers through third-party martech companies. However, you must look for key attributes to make sure you're choosing the right partner. For a community to succeed, your martech partner must be a consumer engagement expert with years of experience establishing communities that deliver value between consumer and brand. The platform must offer intuitive design, personalized communications, and incorporate intrinsic behavior drivers. Ask questions to determine whether the company offers an expert team that delivers easy implementation with proven approaches to foster one-to-one consumer relationships at scale.

Look for a partner that offers the ability to customize your community destination—one that's tailored to your brand and integrates brand properties seamlessly. Finally, make sure the setup process is simple, straightforward and fast, so your community is up and running quickly—avoid lengthy, drawn-out coding processes or complicated approaches that you have to figure out yourself.

Myth 6

Communities don't grow the bottom line—and probably aren't measurable



Marketing is all about the metrics, and the best engagement technology platforms today provide marketers with relevant tools to evaluate performance and community value. Avoid getting stuck with dashboards that don't mean anything or are too confusing to interpret. Look for a platform that can give you performance analytics and reporting across three key community performance indicators: loyalty, impact, and conversion.



Ready to get started on your own brand-owned consumer community?

[Give us a shout out.](#) Or if you want to learn how some companies are successfully leveraging brand owned communities to achieve exciting levels of consumer engagement, [check out these case studies.](#)

About Vesta

Vesta is a leading marketing technology company that powers online communities to turn real consumers into brand evangelists—using zero-party data to deliver personalized content and experiences at scale. Hundreds of brands have partnered with us to activate millions of consumers to drive customer acquisition, long-term loyalty, and actionable insights. Founded in 2009, we work with leading brands including Unilever, P&G, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and more. For more information, please visit vesta-go.com.

