Encouraging Participation & Contributions in Online Communities

Thursday, April 4th, 2013
CSC112D -- DMS103

Web 1.0
Web 2.0

Web 1.0 vs Web 2.0
Types of Contributions

- Generating Data & Information
  - Wikipedia, Open Street Maps
  - Rankings (Yelp, RottenTomatoes)
  - Photo tagging on Facebook
  - Tutorials, Instructables
  - Resolving bugs on GitHub

- Communication
  - Forum discussions
  - Comments on blogs
  - Messages on Facebook, Twitter
  - Asks on Tumblr
Types of Contributions

- Creating Profiles
- Sharing Media (e.g. songs, shows)

Participation Inequality

- 1% -- Heavy Contributors
- 9% -- Intermittent Contributors
- 90% -- Lurkers
90% of Contributions from Heavy Contributors (top 1%)

10% of Contributions from Intermittent Contributors (9%)

No Contributions from Lurkers (90%)

Participation Inequality

- 20% to 30% on Facebook are “power” users
  - Friend requests, likes, messaging, tagging
- 11% of internet users have blogs
- 1% of Amazon customers write reviews
- .02% of Wikipedia readers do 5 or more edits
  - 0.003% have contributed 67% of edits
Why fix participation inequality?

- Not a representative sample
  - Customer feedback, political insights
- Biased towards extreme
  - Yelp! Reviews
- Lack of diversity
  - Posts may be skipped due to volume

Why do users participate?

- Anticipated reciprocity (bridging social capital)
- Reputation & Attribution
- Sense of efficacy
- Sense of belonging & emotional connection
Anticipated Reciprocity

Bridging Social Capital

Crap. Can someone give me the coordinates for these three masses? I think I need them and forgot to get the dang diagrams for this week. 😞 And please tell me which mass it is when you give me the coordinates. 😊 Thanks much!
Sense of Efficacy

I've got baggage.
I've been feeling really crappy lately. Every time I turn around, something else is falling apart. Say, could you hold this for a minute?

check it

Take that for you?
I'm really loving life right now. Things are finally clicking into place. I've got happiness to spare. Let me lighten your load.

carry it

Take a minute to unload whatever's been bringing you down. Big or small, doesn't matter. Sometimes it just helps to get it out there and know someone heard it.

Take a minute to read about someone else's issues. Then choose a song to help get them through the pain. We'll send it along to them.
Belonging & Emotions

Kickstarter

Rock Vibe - Accessible Gaming
By RapidEye Design

115 backers
$17,400 pledged of $15,950 goal
0 seconds to go

Make Pick Play Shop
Encouraging Participation

- Ask!
- Make contributing easy
- Reward participation and quality
- Promote community

Ask

- Ask everyone
  - Broadcast a description of the need
  - "Fear campaigns"

*Dear Wikipedia readers: We are the small non-profit that runs the #1 website in the world. We have only 150 staff but serve 400 million users, and have costs like any other top site: servers, power, rent, programs, staff and legal help. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We take no government funds. We run on donations averaging about £30. If everyone reading this gave £5, our fundraiser would be done within an hour. If Wikipedia is useful to you, take one minute to keep it online another year by donating whatever you can today. We just need 1% of readers to donate. We’re not there yet. Please help us forget fundraising and get back to Wikipedia. Thank you.*

Criticism

Frequent complaints about paid street fundraisers include the use of aggressive or deceitful tactics, lack of knowledge of the charity, refusal to listen to a person who doesn’t want to stop, the use of sarcasm or other negative language intended to make a person feel guilty if they decline to stop. Paid street fundraisers are sometimes known as "shuggers" because usually fundraising is viewed as aggressive or invasive (a portmanteau of “charity” and “nagging”). It became popular as a way of referring to street fundraisers after several articles appeared in British newspapers which pointed out the negative image of the people doing the job.[1][2][3][4]

Sometimes the sheer frequency of fundraisers in a certain area will lead to frustration, a survey of four roads in London during 2009 found 50% of them working on four roads over a six-week period.[5] However, those in the charity sector see street fundraising as an invaluable method of raising brand awareness, and recruiting younger donors under the age of 35 who are "like gold-dust for a charity because they will give over a longer lifetime.[6]"
Ask

- Target specific people
  - Make participants feel unique
  - Target requests to their interests
  - Requests from well-liked, high status contributors

Make Contributing Easy

- Design flow
  - Allow limited participation without an account
Make Contributing Easy

- Design flow
  - Allow limited participation without an account
  - Make needed contributions visible & trackable
Make Needs Visible

Design flow
◦ Allow limited participation without an account
◦ Make needed contributions visible & trackable

Low-impact participation
◦ Like/Favorite buttons
Make Contributing Easy

- Design flow
  - Allow limited participation without an account
  - Make needed contributions visible & trackable

- Low-impact participation
  - Like/Favorite buttons
  - Provide the bulk of information, users edit
Design flow
- Allow limited participation without an account
- Make needed contributions visible & trackable

Low-impact participation
- Like/Favorite buttons
- Provide the bulk of information, users edit

No-impact participation
- “Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought”
Reward Participation & Quality

- Reward participation
- Reward quality contributions
  - Let users rate each
  - Leaderboards
  - Sort by best

Promote Community

- Allow & display profiles
- Notify users of comments or answers
- Recognize other people’s contributions
Community Commitment

- Affective commitment (want to continue)
  - Identify–based (part of the community)
  - Bond–based (close to individual members)
- Normative commitment (should continue)
- Need–based commitment (must continue)

Community Commitment

- Cluster users into small, named groups
  [bonds–based, identity–based]
- Recruit people with existing social ties
  [bonds–based]
- Off–topic conversation
  [bonds–based]
- Make content exclusive or difficult to transfer
  [needs–based]
- Highlight ability to return favors
  [normative]
Community Commitment

- Large community, high volume communication [bonds-based]
- Diversity of interest [identity-based]
- Off-topic conversation [identity-based]
- Highlight similar communities [need-based]

Summary

- Types of contributions
- Why people participate
- How to encourage participation
- How to build and retain a community