

Facebook Group Launch Plan

SUMMARY

The following is a set of guidelines for launching a new Facebook group for the Ford Family Foundation. It can also serve as a general resource for launching an online community in general. Overall it makes the assumption that there will be a Community Manager role within the overall efforts and not a purely organically developed community.

PLANNING

This is the initial effort where you identify the goals, purpose and initial strategies and timelines. This stage should also include gathering and/or review of community research and assessment efforts. It should be clear during this stage what is the need that the community has and how the use of this online community will be meeting that need.

Primary Goals

- Clearly define the purpose of the community and what success will look like
- Develop a set of community norms or House Rules for the group
- Review initial feedback from community members (survey, participant comments, etc) to identify possible individuals for participation in the Soft Launch phase.

Activities

- Identify a Community Manager
- Create a basic timeline for moving through the following phases. This may need to be fluid as pacing can vary from a few weeks to multiple months at each stage depending on the community, their needs, available resources to support and competing initiatives.
- Identify Community Champions and initial active users

SOFT LAUNCH

The idea behind a soft launch is to introduce the online space to members of your community you consider an “easy sell”, your champions and early adopters. These may be folks that have previously expressed a specific interest in online community building or you simply know are active in particular social spaces and supportive of your community.

Primary Goals

- Give your Community Champions an opportunity to take ownership early on by role modeling and shaping community norms.
- Give early adopters an opportunity to “be the first” to contribute.
- Establish “seed content” prior to hard launch so it seems like a vibrant and engaging space when new people arrive in the next phase.
- Create a safe space for community members to initially try out roles as Community Managers, Champions, contributors, etc.

Activities

- Provide simple tasks for Champions on a regular basis that are clearly tied to specific outcomes related to building the community, not just number of participants in group
- If using a Community Manager keep them focused on role modeling ideal behaviors and supporting the forming, stroking and norming stages of [group development](#)
 - Welcoming new members
 - Asking for and/or making introductions
 - Recognizing/reinforcing activities in line with the community norms
- Start to identify trends around engagement (topics, times, types of content)

PUBLIC/HARD LAUNCH

This phase focuses on larger scale public promotion of the group. Even if you are creating a private or closed group you will want to more assertively market to the target audience.

Primary Goals

- Increase visibility of the group for the purposes of attracting new members
- Clearly articulate and highlight examples of “shared ownership” of the group
- Recognize the impact and successes of the group

Activities

- Actively recruit new members. Create easy opportunities for your community to take part in this activity with a clear reason of “why”. May make use of campaigns, challenges, etc to make it timely and fun.
- Formalize a plan to allow community members to move within the range of roles (Champion, Active and Observers). Important that this allows for both upward and downward in levels of engagement and not only seeing upward as success.
- Community manager shifts role of welcoming and nurturing new members to community as a whole and focus more energy on the Performing stage of group development.

ONGOING EVOLUTION

This phase requires strong listening skills and the ability to “read the group”. It is important not to prescribe more than you respond. Maintaining this phase for the community is about finding the balance between meeting the changes needs of the group and providing enough easy actions that engagement stays approachable and relevant to the overall norms. During this phase the group will isolate between the Norming, Performing and when appropriate Adjourning stages of group development.

Primary Goals

- Listen...no really listen to the needs of the group. The Community Manger should be observing and learning far more often then talking at this phase.
- Be open to evolving needs of the community and prepared to respond with new approaches

- Actively engage and support the various levels of participation as members will begin to transition between active members and champions. It is important to help folks feel welcome whatever their current desire for engagement is.

Activities

- Campaigns: These create short, focused and timely events that have a clear and impact. They also create great opportunities for “wins” to help keep building the sense of accomplishment for the group.
- Feedback Opportunities: Annual surveys, monthly questions, etc. It should be clear to the group that part of the process is to continually be gathering and listening to their feedback.
- Themes: Monthly or weekly themes to be regularity and predictability. Becoming part of a regular routine will help your group stay on the radar and compete with the constant flood of “new” place to engage online.