

Calling In Community Management:

with a Transformative Justice Lens



Index

Introduction	7
Section 1: A mindset of Boundaries and Bridges	8
Types of Justice	9
Punitive Justice	9
Restorative Justice	10
Transformative Justice	10
The History of the Transformative Justice Movement	11
Online Communities and Transformative Justice:	11
Transformative Justice in Online Community Management	12
Transformative Justice Principles	13
Business Case for Transformative Justice in Online Community Management:	13
Responsibility of Professional Community Managers:	14
A Framework to Address Harm	14
Strategies for a Gradient of Online Community Harms	15
1. Irritating/Annoying	15
2. Crashing/Spamming	15
3. Trolling	16
4. Griefing	16
5. Bullying	16
6. Hating	17
7. Harassing	17
8. Stalking	17
9. Doxing	18
10. Swatting	18
Stories of Transformative Justice and Community Management	18
From Reactive to Proactive:	18
A Recipe for True Change	19
1. Identify and Define Behavior:	19
2. Outline Harmful Effects:	19
3. Hypothesize on Clues to Intent and Motivation:	20
4. Notice Systemic Punitive Reactions:	20
5. Identify Transformative Justice Strategies:	20
6. Identify Stakeholders and Reorder Strategies:	20
7. Implement Transformative Justice Interventions:	20
8. Review and Deconstruct Outcomes at Each Level of Impact:	20
9. Share with Peers:	20
Stories of Harmful Behaviors and Transformative Justice	21
1. Irritating/Annoying:	21
2. Crashing/Spamming:	22

3. Trolling:	23
4. Griefing:	23
5. Bullying:	24
6. Hating:	25
7. Harassing:	26
8. Stalking:	27
9. Doxing:	27
Transformative Justice and Conflict Resiliency	28
Transformative Justice vs. Restorative Justice:	28
Conflict Resiliency vs. Conflict Resolution:	29
Section 2: Transformative Justice Starts with Me	30
Introduction:	31
Preferences	31
Biases	31
Prejudices	31
Discrimination	31
Oppression	31
Chapter 1: Acknowledging Personal Biases	33
Acknowledging Biases in Online Community Management:	34
Self-Reflection and Mindful Observation:	34
Tools and Techniques for Unearthing Biases:	34
Creating a Bias Journal:	34
Transforming Awareness into Action:	34
Educational Exploration:	35
Letting Go of Preconceived Notions:	35
Chapter 2: Embracing Allyship	36
Accompliceship & Allyship	37
1. Understanding Accompliceship: The Dormant Stage	38
2. Evolving into an Ally: Conscious Efforts	38
3. Allyship as an Ongoing Commitment	38
4. Accompliceship to Allyship: Strategies for Community Managers	38
5. The Role of Community Managers in Systemic Change	39
6. Real-Life Implications and Case Studies	39
7. Challenges and Continuous Growth	39
Conclusion: From Accompliceship to Allyship – A Continuous Journey	39
Accompliceship as Co-Conspiratorship:	40
Accompliceship as Self-Care and Renewal:	40
Strategic Retreat and Covert Organization:	40
The Synergy Between Conscious Accompliceship and Allyship:	40
Practical Steps for Community Managers	41
Pitfalls of Allyship:	42

Being Perceived as Too Disruptive or Aggressive	42
Being Perceived as Too Passive or Covert:	42
Navigating the Balance:	42
Chapter 3. Stepping Up as Co-Conspirators:	44
Understanding the Shift from Ally to Co-Conspirator	45
Strategies for Co-Conspirators in Online Communities	45
The Impact of Co-Conspiratorship in Online Communities	45
Case Studies: Co-Conspiratorship in Action	46
Chapter 4. Cycling Through Disruption:	48
Introduction to Disruption	48
The Cycle of Disruption	49
Strategies for Disruption	50
Embracing the Cycle	50
Chapter 5: Language Matters: Changing the Language to Include More and Shame Less	52
Introduction	52
Understanding the Impact of Language	53
Creating an Inclusive Lexicon	53
The Ripple Effect of Language Change	53
Addressing Marginalization through Language	54
Conclusion: Language as a Tool for Transformation	54
Chapter 6: Understanding Power Dynamics	55
The Gradient of Privilege and Power	56
Internal Company Community	56
Defining the Stakeholders:	56
The Community Managers' Double Bind	58
Risks and Rewards:	58
Fear of AI Replacement:	60
External Community	61
Understanding, Fostering and Responding to Diversity of input and needs:	63
Multiple Hats-one person:	65
The Multifaceted Role of a Community Manager	66
The Moderator - Facilitating Respectful Dialogue	66
The Mediator - Resolving Conflicts	66
The Marketer - Promoting the Brand	67
The Complaint Resolution Specialist - Addressing Grievances	67
Nuance and Empathy	67
Tension and Multiplicity	68
The Community Manager as Judge, Prosecutor, Defender, and Jury	68
The Transformative Justice Toolkit for Community Managers	68
Negotiating Multiple Roles: A Transformative Justice Approach	69
Understanding the Multiplicity of Roles	70

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

Content Creation with a Transformative Lens	70
Conflict Resiliency and Transformative Justice	70
Event Planning and Fostering Inclusion	71
Customer Service and Advocacy	71
Building a Resilient Community with a Transformative Justice Lens	71
The Role of Conflict in Community Health	72
Educating Internal Stakeholders	72
Buffering and Uplifting Under-Recognized Voices	72
Iterating on Community Engagement	73
The Community Manager as a Facilitator of Transformative Justice	73
Community Debt: Extraction instead of Reciprocity	73
Mitigating and Addressing Community Debt:	75
Chapter 7. Creating Impactful Changes:	78
Introduction: Creating Impactful Changes	79
# 1. Setting Clear Objectives:	79
# 2. Engaging Stakeholders:	80
# 3. Implementing Sustainable Solutions:	80
# 4. Monitoring and Feedback:	80
# 5. Celebrating Milestones and Successes:	81
Chapter 8. Sustaining the Momentum:	82
Introduction: Sustaining the Momentum	82
1. Continuous Learning and Adaptation	83
2. Consistent Communication and Engagement	83
3. Nurturing Allyship and Accomplish-ship	84
4. Leveraging Data and Feedback	84
5. Celebrating Achievements and Reflecting on Challenges	84
Chapter 9. Building Supportive Communities:	86
1. Establishing Inclusive Norms:	87
2. Prioritizing Mental Health and Well-being:	87
3. Encouraging Skill and Knowledge Sharing:	88
4. Fostering Interpersonal Connections:	88
5. Ensuring Safety and Conflict Resiliency:	89
Chapter 10. Never-Ending Evolution:	90
Continuous Learning:	91
1. Embracing Curiosity:	91
2. Updating Skills and Knowledge:	91
3. Learning from Mistakes:	91
Adaptation and Flexibility:	91
Toxic Positivity and Making Space for Endings:	92
Section 3: Influencing and Inviting change at all levels	93
Why we Call-Out and When to Call In: A Journey Towards Transformative Justice	93

Understanding Call-Out Culture:	94
Calling Out as a Last Resort:	95
Strategic Use of Calling Out:	95
When resorting to calling out, it's crucial to:	95
The Transformative Power of Calling In	96
The Importance of Calling In:	96
The Role of Calling In in Transformative Justice:	96
Responding to a Call-In or Call-Out	97
Understanding the Dynamics: Who is Calling You Out or In Matters	97
Responding to a Call-In	98
Responding to a Call-Out	98
The Process of Calling In and Ensuring Genuine Intent	99
Understanding Power Dynamics in Calling In	99
Tailoring the Approach	100
1. Steps of Calling In:	100
2. Inviting Participation from Those Harmed:	100
3. Checking the Rescuer Complex:	101
Recognizing Performative Allyship	101
In Oneself:	102
In Others:	102
Section 4: Calling All for Transformative Justice in Online Communities	104
Facilitating Inclusive Conversations:	105
Challenging and Changing Norms:	105
Transformative Justice in Practice:	105
Promoting Equity and Diversity:	105
Continuous Learning and Adaptation:	106
Inclusive Hiring Practices for Community Management Positions:	106
Calling In Peer Community Managers:	106
Conclusion	107
Acknowledgements	109
References and Further Reading	110

Introduction

Navigating the Complex Landscape of Community Management

Virtual communities have become integral to our social fabric, the role of community managers has never been more crucial. They are the architects of online spaces, cultivating environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds converge to share, learn, and connect. Amidst this dynamic landscape, the need for a comprehensive guide that navigates the intricacies of community management while championing transformative justice is both urgent and essential. This book seeks to address this gap, providing community managers with tools, strategies, and insights to foster inclusive, resilient, and vibrant communities.

Community managers often find themselves at the crossroads of various interests, needs, and challenges. From creating engaging content to resolving conflicts, from ensuring representation to fostering a sense of belonging, the role is as multifaceted as it is demanding. Traditional approaches to community management often fall short, necessitating a paradigm shift towards practices grounded in transformative justice. This book explores this shift, guiding community managers in creating spaces that are not just reactive but proactive in addressing conflicts, biases, and systemic inequalities.

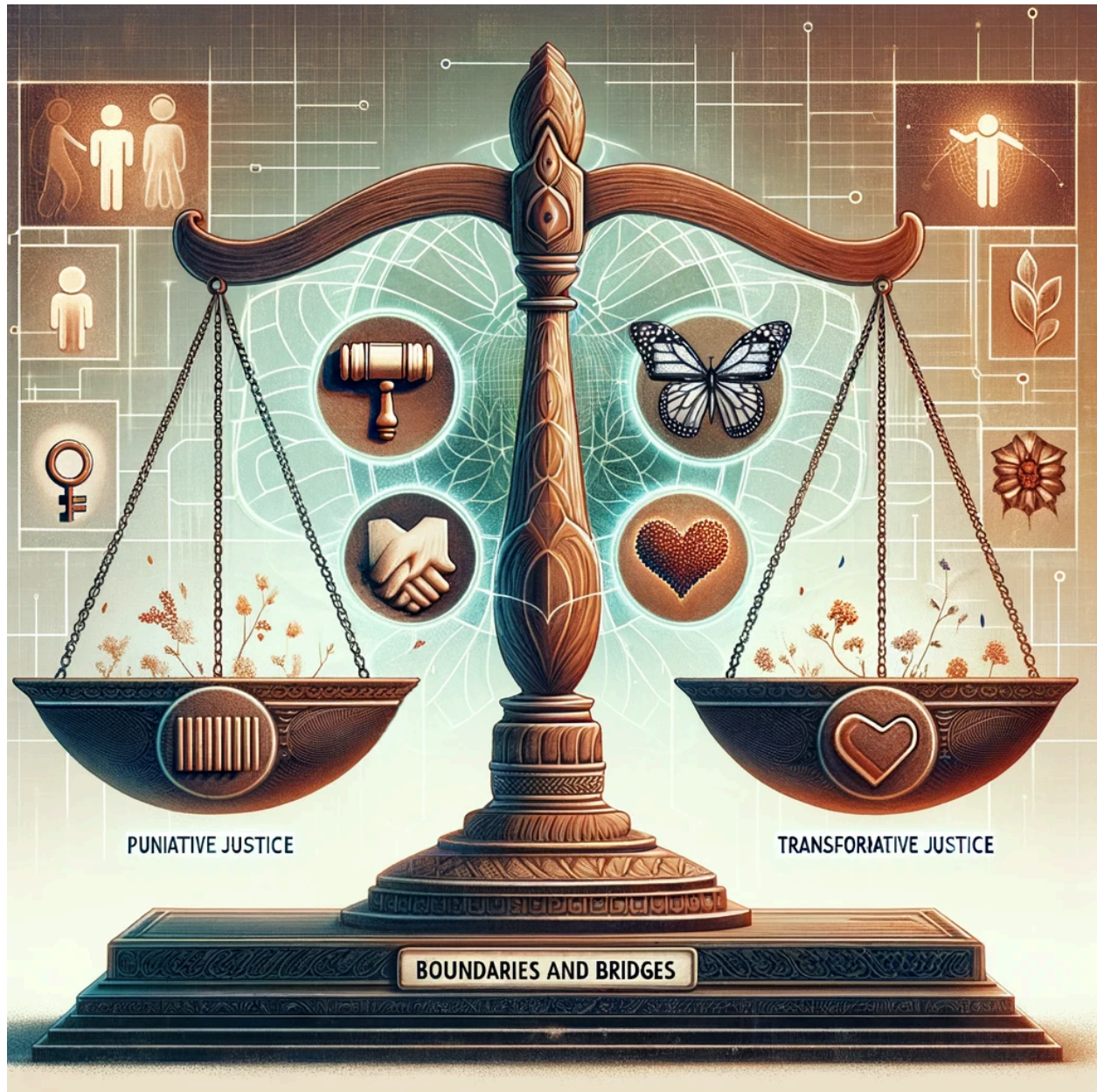
Each chapter of this book is crafted to serve as a valuable resource for community managers, regardless of the stage of their career. From understanding biases to building resilient communities, the chapters delve into various aspects of community management through a transformative justice lens. Practical examples, case studies, and actionable strategies are woven throughout, enabling community managers to tailor the insights to their unique contexts.

Moreover, this book extends an invitation to community managers across the globe to contribute to the discourse. Section 4 serves as the start of a repository, curating real-life examples of transformative justice in action within various professional and grassroots communities. By sharing your experiences, challenges, and triumphs, you not only contribute to a rich tapestry of knowledge but also partake in a collective journey towards redefining community management. This repository is a testament to the power of shared learning and the profound impact of community managers in shaping online spaces.

In essence, this book is not just a guide but a call to action. It beckons community managers to delve deep into the principles of transformative justice, to reimagine their roles as catalysts for change, and to contribute to a living repository of knowledge. Through shared experiences and collaborative learning, this book aims to empower community managers to create communities that are not just spaces for interaction but crucibles for transformation and growth.

Section 1: A mindset of Boundaries and Bridges

Transforming Moderation, Mediation, and Reactive Management



In the complex and dynamic world of online communities, the role of community managers often involves navigating the delicate balance between establishing boundaries and building bridges. Communities, by their very nature, are diverse melting pots of opinions, experiences, and values. While this diversity can lead to rich, meaningful interactions, it can also give rise to conflicts, disagreements, and instances of harm. **How** a community manager responds to such situations is pivotal to the health, resilience, and inclusivity of the community. Here we will explore a gradient of approaches to justice in conflict that community managers can and do employ in their roles.

Conflict and Why it Won't Ever Go Away

As the age-old saying goes, "Can't we all just get along?" While the desire for harmony is universal, conflict remains an inevitable part of human interaction, especially in community settings. To understand why harmony is elusive, we must first delve into the nature of conflict and the unique challenges posed by online communities.

Defining Conflict:

Conflict at its most simple measurement is discord in a previous harmonious relationship and can be defined as a clash of interests, values, actions, or directions. It arises when individuals or groups perceive threats to their needs, interests, or concerns. While conflict is often seen negatively, it can lead to growth, understanding, and innovation when managed constructively.

Navigating the Continuum of Fluid Communication

In the digital age, the way we communicate and connect has been transformed, evolving into a continuum of interaction that spans from the traditional and static to the dynamic and fluid. This chapter delves into the rich tapestry of online platforms that facilitate these interactions, examining how they serve as conduits for communication among community members and between businesses and their patrons. From asynchronous communication like emails to real-time engagement in virtual realms, each platform offers unique opportunities and challenges in fostering dialogue and managing conflict.

As we explore this spectrum, we will uncover how these platforms can either facilitate seamless conversations or become hotbeds for discord. We will examine the strengths and limitations of each platform in preventing and addressing conflict, providing vivid stories that bring to life the types of disagreements likely to occur. Additionally, this chapter will scrutinize the dynamics of two-way fluid communication within product communities, shedding light on why businesses often resort to one-way broadcasts under the guise of community engagement.

By understanding this continuum of communication, community managers and businesses can strategically navigate these digital terrains, fostering spaces that are not only inclusive and respectful but also conducive to growth and innovation.

1. Emails

- Description: Electronic mail is a method of exchanging digital messages over the internet. It allows for asynchronous communication, enabling recipients to read and respond at their convenience.
- Examples: Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo Mail.
- Conflict Hotspots: Misunderstandings due to lack of tone or context, delayed responses, or spam.
- Strengths: Asynchronous, allows for thoughtful responses, can be archived and searched.
- Limitations: Lack of immediate feedback, potential for misinterpretation.
- Story: Jane, a team lead, sends out an email to her team with feedback on a project. Without tone or context, a team member misconstrues the feedback as harsh criticism, leading to resentment.

2. Forums

- Description: Digital platforms where users can post and discuss topics in dedicated threads.
- Examples: Reddit, Quora, Stack Overflow.
- Conflict Hotspots: Disagreements over opinions, trolling, off-topic derailments.
- Strengths: Allows for in-depth discussion, can be moderated, chronological or upvoted-based responses.
- Limitations: Can be dominated by vocal minorities, potential echo chambers.
- Story: On a tech forum, a user posts a controversial opinion about a popular software tool. This sparks a heated debate, with personal attacks overshadowing constructive discussion.

3. User-Voice Upvoting

- Description: Platforms where users can suggest features or changes and other users can upvote these suggestions.
- Examples: UserVoice, Canny.
- Conflict Hotspots: Popularity contests, strategic downvoting.
- Strengths: Direct feedback from user base, prioritization based on popularity.
- Limitations: May overlook niche but important requests, potential for gaming the system.
- Story: A software company's upvoting platform is flooded with requests for a specific feature. However, a competing faction strategically downvotes it, causing internal division among users.

4. Social Media Sites

- Description: Platforms where users can share content, updates, and engage with others.
- Examples: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
- Conflict Hotspots: Polarized opinions, misinformation, cyberbullying.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Strengths: Broad reach, immediate communication.
- Limitations: Echo chambers, spread of misinformation.

Story: A misleading post on a social media site leads to widespread misinformation.

5. Group Chat & Voice Chat Platforms

- Description: Real-time text or voice communication platforms.
- Examples: Discord, Slack, Zoom.
- Conflict Hotspots: Miscommunications, exclusion, disruptive behavior.
- Strengths: Immediate, personal interaction.
- Limitations: Limited to real-time responses, can escalate quickly.

Story: In a gaming group chat, a misunderstanding escalates into a heated argument.

6. Virtual 2D Platforms

- Description: Online spaces that offer a two-dimensional virtual environment for interaction.
- Examples: Habbo Hotel, Club Penguin (now closed).
- Conflict Hotspots: Griefing, inappropriate content, bullying.
- Strengths: Visual and engaging, community-building.
- Limitations: Limited expressiveness compared to 3D, can be less immersive.

Story: In a virtual 2D space, a user is grieving others' creations.

7. Virtual 3D & VR Platforms

- Description: Immersive three-dimensional and Virtual Reality spaces.
- Examples: Second Life, VRChat, Horizon Worlds.
- Conflict Hotspots: Harassment, identity theft, disruption of experiences.
- Strengths: Highly immersive, rich interactions.
- Limitations: High technical requirements, anonymity-related issues.

Story: In a VR platform, a user is persistently harassed.

The Illusion of Community in Business Communication

Many businesses refer to their consumer base as "communities." However, the majority of these so-called "community" interactions are often one-sided. While businesses broadcast messages, promotions, or updates, the avenues for consumers to voice concerns or provide feedback are limited or heavily moderated. **True communities thrive on open dialogue, mutual respect, and shared values.** By limiting communication to one-way broadcasts, businesses may miss out on the richness of genuine community engagement and the invaluable insights it can provide.

Two-Way Fluid Communication: Pros and Cons

- Pros: Direct communication allows for immediate feedback, fostering a sense of community and shared ownership. It can lead to rapid conflict resolution and increased user engagement.

- Cons: It may lead to overwhelming noise, with businesses struggling to manage and respond to the influx of feedback. Conflicts can escalate quickly if not moderated effectively.

Online vs. In-Person: The Polarization Dilemma:

Online communities, with their vast and diverse membership, amplify conflict in ways that in-person interactions don't. Several reasons account for this heightened polarization:

1. Anonymity: Online platforms often provide a veil of anonymity, emboldening individuals to express more extreme views without fear of real-world repercussions.
2. Echo Chambers: Algorithms cater to users' preferences, often showing them content that aligns with their beliefs, thus reinforcing existing views and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives.
3. Lack of Non-Verbal Cues: Online communication lacks the nuance of facial expressions, tone, and body language, leading to misunderstandings.
4. Immediate Reactions: The instantaneous nature of online interactions can lead to impulsive responses, escalating conflicts.

Common Community Conflicts and Outcomes:

In any community, be it offline or online, conflicts are an inevitable byproduct of human interactions. They manifest in various forms, each with its own set of triggers and outcomes. By identifying and categorizing these conflicts, community managers and members can better navigate the intricate web of disputes, paving the way for timely interventions and sustainable resolutions. This section delves into some of the most common types of conflicts encountered within communities, shedding light on their origins and potential ramifications. Recognizing these patterns is the first step towards fostering a harmonious and cohesive community environment.

1. Resource Conflicts: Arising from competition over limited resources, these can lead to rivalry and resentment.
Outcome: Often results in a zero-sum game where one party's gain is another's loss unless resources are increased or shared creatively.
2. Value Conflicts: Stemming from differing beliefs, values, or norms.
Outcome: Can lead to deep-seated animosity unless parties agree to disagree or find a shared value.
3. Information Conflicts: Caused by misinformation or lack of clarity.
Outcome: Typically resolvable through clear communication and fact-checking.

4. Relational Conflicts: Arising from personal animosities or past grievances.

Outcome: Can lead to prolonged disputes unless there's active intervention or the parties reconcile.

Business Practices in Handling Community Conflicts:

Businesses, especially those operating online platforms, recognize the importance of managing community conflicts to avoid damage to brand reputation and prevent membership churn.

Standard conflict prevention and response practices include:

1. Community Guidelines: Clear rules that outline acceptable behavior, aiming to prevent conflicts proactively.
2. Moderation: Employing individuals or AI systems to monitor community interactions and intervene when conflicts arise.
3. Feedback Mechanisms: Allowing users to report harmful behaviors or content, ensuring community self-regulation.
4. Conflict Resolution Teams: Dedicated teams trained to handle severe conflicts, ensuring a fair and structured process.

Goals in Addressing Conflict:

1. Conflict Resolution: A reactive approach that focuses on resolving the dispute after it has arisen. Techniques can include mediation, negotiation, or arbitration.

2. Conflict Resiliency: A proactive approach emphasizing the community's ability to prevent, withstand, recover, and grow from conflicts. This involves fostering a culture of open communication, mutual respect, and ongoing education.

Conclusion:

While the dream of a conflict-free community is enticing, it remains a utopia. Conflicts, with their roots in human nature and societal structures, will persist. However, understanding the nature of conflicts and employing proactive and reactive strategies can ensure that communities remain vibrant, inclusive, and resilient amidst disagreements.

Bridging the Gap: Shifting from Conflict Management to Justice Mechanisms

Having established the foundational practices businesses employ to handle community conflicts, it's evident that while conflict resolution and resiliency are paramount, they represent just one facet of the broader community management spectrum. Beyond the immediate resolution of disputes, there's a pressing need to address the underlying dynamics of justice.

This entails a transition from merely managing conflicts to proactively establishing a framework of justice that encapsulates the ethos of the community. Such a shift not only aids in conflict resolution but also sets the stage for a more comprehensive understanding of justice in online communities. This holistic approach, which encompasses punitive, restorative, and transformative paradigms, paves the way for creating platforms that are not just reactive but proactive in fostering harmony, inclusivity, and growth. As we delve into the types of justice, we'll explore how these paradigms intertwine with conflict management strategies to create a cohesive community experience.

Types of Justice

Online communities are subject to a myriad of interactions that necessitate the implementation of justice mechanisms to safeguard members and maintain harmony. These mechanisms range from punitive measures aimed at penalizing wrongdoings, to restorative and transformative approaches that seek to repair and prevent harm. Understanding and strategically employing these approaches is crucial for community managers aiming to foster environments that are not only safe but also respectful and inclusive.

This section explores three distinct paradigms of justice – Punitive, Restorative, and Transformative – each with its own set of principles, methods, and outcomes. Through examples and case studies, we will dissect how these approaches can be applied in real-world scenarios within online communities. Community managers will gain insights into how these paradigms can be leveraged to establish boundaries that protect and respect all members, while simultaneously building bridges that foster connection, understanding, and shared community values. By understanding and judiciously applying these justice approaches, community managers can ensure that their communities are not just platforms for dialogue but are resilient ecosystems that thrive on inclusivity, respect, and continuous growth.

Punitive Justice

Punitive justice, derived from traditional criminal justice models, focuses on punishing the offender rather than addressing the root causes of their behavior or the harm they may have caused. It operates on the principle that breaking a rule or guideline warrants a penalty or sanction.

Examples:

1. Banning or Suspending Users: If a community member consistently posts harmful content or harasses other members, they might be banned or suspended from the platform without a chance for dialogue or understanding the root of their actions.
2. Public Shaming: In some communities, rule breakers might be highlighted or called out publicly, leading them to feel ostracized or embarrassed. The ripple effect of shame and exile

can have devastating consequences on the individuals and sometimes also on the business depending on how they react.

3. Stripping Privileges: A user might lose certain privileges, like posting in specific forums or accessing certain content, as a direct response to their behavior.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a response to harm that focuses on addressing the needs of all involved parties: the harmed, the harmer, and the community. It seeks to repair relationships and understand the underlying reasons for harmful behavior, aiming for a resolution that acknowledges the harm and finds ways to make amends.

Examples:

1. Mediated Conversations: If a conflict arises between members, a community manager might facilitate a dialogue between the parties involved to understand each perspective and work towards a mutual resolution.
2. Apologies and Amends: Users who realize their mistakes might be encouraged to apologize and make amends, perhaps by contributing positively to the community or participating in educational sessions.
3. Community Feedback: After an incident, the broader community might be consulted about how they felt, what they believe should be done, and how similar incidents can be prevented in the future.

Transformative Justice

Origins and Evolution:

Transformative justice has its roots in indigenous and ancestral practices from various cultures, where community-based approaches to addressing harm and conflict were prevalent. By the late 20th century, with the rise of the prison abolition movement and critiques of the criminal justice system, transformative justice moved beyond outcomes of restoration and into the murky waters of village and systemic transformation. It emerged as an alternative framework to address the root causes of harm rather than merely punishing offenders, emphasizing healing, restoration, and transformation.

Key Principles:

1. Accountability: Transformative Justice emphasizes that individuals who cause harm must take responsibility for their actions and actively work to make amends.
2. Safety: It prioritizes the safety and well-being of those affected by harm, ensuring that they have the support they need to heal.
3. Transformation: Instead of focusing solely on punishment, Transformative Justice aims to transform individuals, relationships, and societal structures that perpetuate harm.

Influence of the Prison Abolition Movement:

The prison abolition movement, spearheaded by figures like Angela Davis, played a pivotal role in shaping Transformative Justice. Activists criticized the penal system's retributive approach, arguing it perpetuated cycles of harm. They advocated for alternatives that addressed the systemic issues leading to criminal behavior, such as poverty, racism, and lack of education.

Transformative justice goes beyond addressing individual incidents and seeks to identify and address the systemic and structural issues that allow harm to occur in the first place. It aims to create an environment where harm is less likely to happen by transforming the underlying conditions and power dynamics.

Examples:

1. Educational Initiatives: Community managers might introduce resources, workshops, or discussions on topics like digital etiquette, empathy, and diversity to foster a more informed and understanding community.
2. Reassessing and Changing Policies: Recognizing that some community guidelines might inadvertently perpetuate harm or discrimination, managers might actively seek feedback with all stakeholders (internal and external) and adapt policies to be more inclusive.
3. Creating Inclusive Spaces: Managers might proactively work to ensure representation and voices of marginalized groups in the community, creating sub-forums or spotlighting diverse voices to ensure equity.

In summary, while punitive justice focuses on penalties for rule-breaking, restorative justice seeks to repair relationships and address harm directly, and transformative justice looks to change the very structures and systems that allow harm to occur. In the context of online community management, each approach offers tools and methodologies to cultivate safe, respectful, and inclusive digital spaces.

Evolving Beyond the Punitive Justice Mindset:

In traditional settings, businesses have often employed punitive measures to address conflicts, especially in community management. This approach is rooted in the idea of punishment as a deterrent, with the hope that penalizing wrongdoers would prevent further infractions. However, as communities evolve and become more intricate, there's an increasing need for businesses to move beyond this mindset for several reasons:

1. Building Trust and Reputation: Punitive measures, while quick and often effective in the short term, can erode trust. When users feel they're likely to be punished without a chance for dialogue or understanding, it can lead to a distrustful community atmosphere. On the other

hand, restorative and transformative justice initiatives prioritize understanding and rehabilitation, leading to stronger community ties and a positive brand image.

2. Sustainability: Punitive measures might deter some problematic behaviors, but they rarely address the root causes. Restorative justice, which focuses on healing and making amends, and transformative justice, which looks at systemic issues leading to conflicts, offer sustainable solutions. By addressing the underlying issues, businesses can foster a healthier community in the long run.

3. Human-Centered Approach: Punitive actions often ignore the human aspect of conflicts. Every individual has a backstory, and their actions are influenced by a myriad of factors. Restorative and transformative justice models consider these human elements, promoting empathy, understanding, and genuine rehabilitation.

4. Adapting to the Changing Socio-Cultural Landscape: With the global push towards more inclusive, understanding, and empathetic societies, businesses cannot afford to be left behind. Adopting restorative and transformative justice models aligns businesses with these evolving societal values, making them more appealing to modern consumers.

5. Long-term Engagement and Loyalty: Users are more likely to remain loyal to platforms where they feel heard, understood, and valued. By prioritizing healing and systemic change over punishment, businesses can ensure that their community members remain engaged and loyal over the long term.

Conclusion:

For businesses seeking long-term sustainability and growth, evolving beyond punitive justice is not just a moral imperative but a strategic one. By embracing restorative and transformative justice models, businesses can cultivate thriving, loyal, and trustful communities, ensuring their continued success in an ever-evolving socio-cultural landscape.

Online Communities and Transformative Justice:

Digital Spaces and Collaborative Justice:

The digital age has ushered in new realms of interaction, with online communities becoming significant spaces for socialization, collaboration, and conflict. These communities often transcend national borders, and traditional forms of law enforcement and judicial intervention are impractical or inapplicable.

In such spaces, issues like cyberbullying, misinformation, and digital harassment arise. The lack of a centralized authority has led many online communities to adopt self-regulatory measures,

mirroring the principles of Transformative Justice. Platforms like Reddit, for instance, rely on moderators and community-driven rules to maintain order and address conflicts.

Reconciliation Cycles:

Online disputes often involve participants from diverse backgrounds and jurisdictions. This diversity makes it challenging to apply a singular legal or moral framework. As a result, online communities have developed reconciliation cycles, reminiscent of Transformative Justice practices. These include:

- Open Dialogues: Forums and threads where users discuss grievances and seek resolutions.
- Restorative Practices: Efforts to repair relationships after harm, such as public apologies or reparations.
- Community Accountability: Peer-led interventions where community members hold each other accountable for harmful behavior.

Challenges and the Way Forward:

While online communities reflect the principles of Transformative Justice, they also face unique challenges. Anonymity can embolden harmful behaviors, and the vastness of the digital space can make accountability elusive. Moreover, power dynamics, influenced by platform algorithms and influential users, can skew justice processes.

Despite these challenges, the digital realm offers a promising frontier for the evolution of transformative justice. As online communities continue to grow and influence societal norms, the principles of Transformative Justice—centered on healing, accountability, and transformation—will remain crucial in shaping just and equitable digital spaces.

Transformative Justice in Online Community Management

In the digital age, online communities have become essential spaces for social interaction, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. However, these communities can also become vulnerable to various forms of harm and disruptive behaviors. Understanding and addressing these harmful behaviors is critical for creating safe, respectful, and inclusive online spaces.

To address these challenges, it's essential to move beyond traditional punitive and restorative justice approaches and embrace transformative justice. While punitive justice focuses on penalizing offenders and restorative justice emphasizes repairing the harm done, transformative justice goes a step further. It seeks to understand and change the root causes and systems that allow harm to occur in the first place.

This approach considers a range of harmful behaviors, each varying in intent, severity, and impact. These behaviors, such as irritating actions, crashing or spamming, trolling, grieving, bullying, hating, harassing, stalking, doxing, and swatting, are positioned on a gradient. This gradient is not just a measure of severity but also reflects the complexity and potential for harm associated with each behavior.

To effectively tackle these behaviors, a community manager must employ a range of transformative justice strategies that span from immediate interventions to long-term systemic changes. By doing so, they can foster environments that are not only resilient to conflict but are also inherently designed to support positive interactions and growth.

In the sections that follow, we will delve into each harmful behavior, understand its nuances, and explore transformative justice strategies that act as antidotes. By using this approach, we aim to empower community managers and stakeholders to create lasting change and foster communities that are safe, respectful, and inclusive for everyone.

Transformative Justice Principles

Transformative justice is grounded in several key principles:

1. **Acknowledgment of Harm:** Recognizing and validating the harm or trauma experienced by individuals without dismissing or minimizing it.
2. **Addressing Root Causes:** Going beyond individual instances to understand and tackle systemic and structural reasons that enable harm.
3. **Inclusivity and Collaboration:** Involving all affected parties, including the harmed, the harmer, and the community, in the process of addressing harm and finding solutions.
4. **Empowerment and Capacity Building:** Enhancing the ability of individuals and communities to prevent harm, respond to it, and build safer spaces.
5. **Holistic Healing:** Addressing both emotional and structural needs to ensure comprehensive healing and prevention of future harm.

Types of Communication and their strengths and limitation from a Justice Lens

The medium of communication plays a pivotal role in the dispensation of justice, whether punitive, restorative, or transformative. Each platform, with its unique features and constraints, can either facilitate or hinder these forms of justice. Taking emails as our starting point, let's explore how this widely-used platform interacts with these justice paradigms.

1. Emails

- Description:

Electronic mail, commonly referred to as email, stands as one of the earliest forms of digital communication. By allowing users to send and receive messages asynchronously over the internet, it offers the convenience of time and reflection. Whether it's personal correspondence, official communication, or marketing outreach, emails have revolutionized the way we connect.

- Examples:

Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo Mail.

- Conflict Hotspots:

Emails, while useful, are often breeding grounds for misunderstandings. The absence of vocal tone, body language, or immediate context can lead to misinterpretations. Conflicts can arise from perceived terseness, misread intentions, delayed responses, or even unsolicited spam emails.

- Strengths:

The asynchronous nature of emails allows individuals time to craft thoughtful, well-structured responses. This pause can be beneficial in conflict scenarios, providing space for reflection and preventing knee-jerk reactions. Emails also provide a written record, which can be archived, searched, and referred to in future discussions or conflict resolutions.

- Limitations:

The lack of immediacy in feedback and the potential for misinterpretation due to the absence of non-verbal cues are significant drawbacks. Additionally, the written word's permanence can mean that hasty or ill-considered words can't be taken back, leading to prolonged disputes.

- Story:

Jane, a diligent team lead, drafts an email to her team providing feedback on a recent project. Intent on being concise, she lists out areas of improvement without much preamble. Tom, a team member, reads the email late at night after a challenging day. The lack of tone or context makes him perceive Jane's feedback as unduly harsh and personal criticism. Instead of seeing it as constructive, he feels singled out and unfairly treated, leading to resentment and tension in subsequent team interactions.

Justice Paradigms and Emails:

- Punitive Justice:

Emails can serve as a record of wrongdoing, and in organizational contexts, might be used as evidence in punitive actions. However, the potential for misunderstandings can lead to unjust punitive measures based on misinterpreted content.

- Restorative Justice:

The reflective space emails offer can be conducive to restorative justice. Parties can take time to understand the situation, acknowledge harm, and craft sincere apologies or solutions. However, the lack of immediate dialogue might delay the restorative process.

- Transformative Justice:

Emails can be tools for transformative justice by facilitating open discussions about systemic issues leading to conflicts. By allowing participants to share perspectives thoughtfully, it can lead to a deeper understanding and long-term change. However, the medium's impersonal nature might sometimes hinder genuine transformative dialogues.

In Conclusion:

While emails offer a structured and reflective medium for communication, they come with their own set of challenges in the realm of justice. Whether punitive, restorative, or transformative, the success of any justice initiative on this platform hinges on understanding its strengths and limitations, and navigating them judiciously.

2. Navigating Justice Through the Medium of Forums

In the digital ecosystem, forums stand out as versatile platforms that foster vibrant discussions and communal knowledge sharing. From tech enthusiasts on Stack Overflow to curious minds on Quora, forums have long been the digital town squares of the internet. However, like any community space, forums are no strangers to conflicts, and the way justice is executed in these spaces is critical to their health and longevity.

Forums: A Closer Look

Forums are digital platforms where users can create, post, and discuss topics in dedicated threads. Examples include Reddit, where diverse communities (subreddits) coalesce around shared interests, and Stack Overflow, a haven for developers seeking solutions and knowledge. These platforms facilitate in-depth discussions and enable users to respond to each other either chronologically or based on community upvotes.

Conflict Hotspots and Justice in Forums

Conflicts in forums often arise from disagreements over opinions, trolling, and off-topic derailments. In such spaces, the application of punitive, restorative, and transformative justice is nuanced.

1. Punitive Justice: In forums, punitive measures can include temporary bans, permanent expulsions, or public call-outs. For instance, a user who persistently trolls threads may be banned. However, these measures can sometimes exacerbate tensions, leading to accusations of bias or suppression of free speech.

2. Restorative Justice: Forums can facilitate restorative justice by encouraging open dialogue and mediation. For example, in a tech forum where a controversial opinion about a software tool

sparks a heated debate, moderators can step in to steer the conversation back to respectful and constructive dialogue, thereby mending the fractured community ties.

3. Transformative Justice: Forums can also be spaces for transformative justice, where systemic issues leading to conflict are addressed. By implementing features that discourage trolling and encourage constructive discourse, such as upvoting and downvoting, forums can create environments that inherently discourage disruptive behavior.

Stories from the Forum Frontlines

Consider a tech forum where a user posts a controversial opinion about a popular software tool, leading to a heated debate filled with personal attacks. In this scenario:

- Punitive Justice: The moderators could simply ban users who engage in personal attacks, swiftly ending the conflict but possibly leading to accusations of overreach.
- Restorative Justice: Alternatively, moderators could intervene to remind users of the community guidelines, encouraging respectful debate and perhaps even creating a dedicated space for discussing controversial topics.
- Transformative Justice: The forum could implement features that allow users to flag toxic behavior or promote constructive posts, fostering a culture that discourages negativity.

The Double-Edged Sword of Forums

Forums, with their ability to accommodate in-depth discussions, are powerful tools in the pursuit of justice. They allow for transparent and democratic moderation (punitive), facilitate conversations that can mend relationships (restorative), and can be designed to encourage positive behavior (transformative). However, they can also be hindered by echo chambers and vocal minorities.

Conclusion: The Role of Justice in Forums

In conclusion, while forums provide a fertile ground for discussions and community building, they also present challenges in administering justice. The medium's strengths and limitations play a crucial role in determining whether punitive, restorative, or transformative justice can be effectively implemented. By understanding these nuances, community managers and users alike can contribute to creating forums that are not only spaces for dialogue but also platforms for fair and equitable community interaction.

Business Case for Transformative Justice in Online Community Management:

1. Brand Reputation: In the age of social media, one harmful incident can escalate quickly and tarnish a brand's reputation. Transformative justice, by addressing root causes and ensuring holistic solutions, can mitigate these risks.

2. Increased User Retention and Engagement: Communities that feel safe, inclusive, and valued are more likely to stay engaged and contribute positively.
3. Innovation and Growth: Diverse and inclusive communities foster varied perspectives, leading to more innovative ideas and solutions.
4. Long-Term Sustainability: By focusing on systemic changes, transformative justice ensures that communities remain harmonious and resilient in the long run.

Responsibility of Professional Community Managers:

Community managers, as leaders, play a crucial role in shaping the culture and dynamics of their online spaces. They have the responsibility to:

1. Set Clear Expectations: Clearly articulate community guidelines and values, ensuring they reflect principles of equity, respect, and inclusivity.
2. Educate and Equip: Provide resources and training to community members on issues like digital etiquette, empathy, and understanding systemic biases.
3. Act Proactively: Don't just react to harm, but actively work to prevent it by addressing potential problem areas and ensuring inclusivity.
4. Engage and Listen: Regularly seek feedback from community members, especially marginalized voices, to understand their needs and concerns.

A Framework to Address Harm

1. Acknowledgment of Harm:
 - Recognize and validate the harm experienced by victims.
 - Address immediate reactions of stakeholders, acknowledging their need for punitive action while proposing a transformative approach.
2. Understanding the Context:
 - Delve into the underlying issues that led to the harmful behavior.
 - Examine systemic or cultural factors contributing to the situation.
3. Engaging Stakeholders:
 - Identify all parties involved, including victims, perpetrators, company executives, community managers, moderators (paid and volunteer), and community members.
 - Acknowledge the differences in motivations and stakes for each group, such as the company's focus on user retention and legal compliance, moderators' desire for a healthy community, and users' need for a safe environment.
4. Addressing Immediate Concerns:
 - Recognize the knee-jerk punitive reactions and address the pain points of stakeholders.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- For instance, volunteer moderators, driven by a sense of community well-being, may demand swift action, while paid moderators might focus on adhering to established guidelines.

5. Crafting Transformative Strategies:

- Propose a range of strategies that address the harm and contribute to building conflict resiliency, such as implementing educational programs, policy changes, and support networks.
- Justify the chosen strategies and their order of implementation by emphasizing long-term benefits and alignment with community values.

6. Creating Buy-in:

- Articulate how transformative justice aligns with the goals and values of each stakeholder.
- Address concerns and objections by showcasing the long-term benefits of building a resilient and empathetic community.

7. Implementation and Feedback:

- Implement the chosen strategies, while continuously engaging with stakeholders for feedback.
- Adjust approaches as needed based on community response and evolving needs.

8. Evaluation and Iteration:

- Assess the short-term and long-term results of the transformative justice approach.
- Iterate and refine strategies to continually foster a community that is resilient to conflicts and supportive of its members.

9. Fostering Conflict Resiliency:

- Emphasize building a community that can adapt and grow through conflicts rather than merely resolving them.
- Encourage practices and norms that facilitate open dialogue, mutual support, and continuous learning.

Antidotes for Online Community Harms

1. Irritating/Annoying

Definition: Behaviors that, while not malicious, can disturb the community experience.

Antidote:

- Community Education: Foster a culture of empathy and patience.
- Clear Guidelines: Transparent rules promote self-regulation.
- Empowerment Tools: Implement mute/block options for user control.
- Feedback Loops: Regularly update the community on changes made from their suggestions.
- Long-Term Norm Building: Invest in creating a culture that discourages annoying behaviors.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies empower individuals while fostering community responsibility.

2. Trolling

Definition: Engaging in deceptive, disruptive, or provocative behavior with the intent to provoke reactions.

Antidote:

- Respectful Communication Training: Embed training modules within the platform.
- Positive Reinforcement: Reward constructive engagement.
- Bystander Support Programs: Encourage users to support victims.
- Conflict Transformation Workshops: Educate on addressing conflicts positively.
- Inclusive Culture Building: Foster environments that discourage trolling.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies transform the community ethos to proactively prevent trolling.

3. Griefing

Definition: Deliberately antagonizing other users by exploiting aspects of the community experience.

Antidote:

- User-Controlled Features: Enhance mute/block/report capabilities.
- Restorative Dialogues: Facilitate conversations between affected parties.
- Proactive Moderation: Implement AI and human moderation.
- Community Resilience Programs: Build capacity to recover from griefing.
- Iterative Policy Updates: Regularly update policies to adapt to new griefing tactics.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies focus on strengthening the community fabric and user autonomy.

4. Bullying

Definition: Persistent, aggressive behavior intended to hurt or intimidate someone perceived as vulnerable.

Antidote:

- Support Resources: Provide resources for victims.
- Bystander Intervention Training: Equip users to challenge bullying.
- Empathetic Moderation: Train moderators in compassionate approaches.
- Community Healing Spaces: Create spaces for sharing and healing.
- Long-Term Anti-Bullying Campaigns: Implement campaigns to shift attitudes.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies focus on systemic change to prevent bullying.

5. Hating

Definition: Expressing intense hostility towards certain groups based on attributes like race, religion, or gender.

Antidote:

- Zero-Tolerance Policies: Enforce strict rules against hate speech.
- Inclusive Community Building: Celebrate diversity actively.
- Educational Programs: Raise awareness about the impact of hate speech.
- Community Dialogues: Facilitate discussions on inclusivity.
- Long-Term Culture Shift Initiatives: Invest in transforming community attitudes.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies aim for a profound transformation in community behavior.

6. Harassing

Definition: Persistent and unwanted attention, often aggressive, that creates an intimidating environment.

Antidote:

- Strong Support Systems: Establish clear pathways for reporting and addressing harassment.
- Awareness Campaigns: Educate the community on the impact of harassment.
- Empathetic Moderation: Train moderators to approach harassment cases with empathy.
- Community Norm Building: Foster a culture of respect and support.
- Policy Iteration: Constantly evolve policies based on community feedback and needs.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies aim to change the underlying community dynamics that enable harassment.

7. Stalking

Definition: Unwanted, obsessive attention by an individual or group towards someone, involving persistent following, monitoring, or harassment online.

Antidote:

- Privacy Controls: Enhance privacy settings to give users control over their data and interactions.
- Awareness and Education: Educate users on digital safety and privacy.
- Supportive Reporting Mechanisms: Establish systems where victims can report stalking comfortably.
- Community Solidarity Initiatives: Create a culture of protecting and supporting one another.
- Collaborative Partnerships: Work with organizations specializing in online safety.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies focus on both immediate protection and long-term empowerment of the community.

8. Doxing

Definition: Publicly revealing private information about an individual without their consent, usually for malicious purposes.

Antidote:

- Robust Data Protection: Implement strong data protection measures.
- User Education on Privacy: Provide resources on securing personal information.
- Proactive Monitoring: Employ AI and human moderation to detect potential doxing attempts.
- Legal and Policy Advocacy: Advocate for policies that protect against doxing.
- Community Building for Privacy Respect: Foster a culture that respects privacy boundaries.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies work towards a cultural shift in respecting privacy and protecting data.

Harmful Behaviors aimed at multiple community members simultaneously

1. Crashing/Spamming

Definition: Deliberate actions to disrupt the platform or inundate it with unwanted content, sometimes for monetary gain or followers.

Antidote:

- Robust Filters: Develop adaptive spam filters.
- User Education: Inform about recognizing and reporting spam.
- Community Vigilance: Encourage users to collaboratively identify and address spam.
- Feedback Systems: Implement systems for users to suggest improvements.
- Partnership with Tech Platforms: Collaborate to create stronger defenses against spamming.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These measures build resilience against external threats while ensuring user engagement.

2. Dog Whistling

Dogwhistling, in any context including community management, is the use of coded or suggestive language that conveys a secondary, often controversial or harmful, meaning to a particular group while seeming innocuous to those not aware of the context. It's like a "whistle" only audible to a certain "dog" – in this case, the targeted audience who understands the underlying message.

In community management, dogwhistling can occur when a community leader, a piece of content, or a member uses terms, phrases, or themes that seem normal or benign on the surface but are actually intended to signal or mobilize a subgroup of the community around an issue, often with the intent to exclude, marginalize, or activate biases against another group.

This can be particularly harmful as it can create an environment of exclusivity, promote divisive agendas, and undermine the community's inclusiveness and safety. It's often a challenge for community managers who strive to maintain positive and inclusive spaces, as dogwhistles are designed to be difficult to detect and prove, thereby slipping past moderation efforts.

In response, community managers must be vigilant, educating themselves on the evolving language and context of their communities, and they may develop policies and use moderation tools to address these issues, including promoting clear communication standards and actively engaging in dialogue to clarify intent when suspicious language is detected.

2. Swatting

Definition: A dangerous prank where a person makes a false report to emergency services, leading them to deploy forces to a specific address.

Antidote:

- Preventive Measures: Collaborate with authorities to identify false reports.
- Educational Campaigns: Raise awareness about the dangers of swatting.
- Community Watch: Encourage users to report suspicious behavior.
- Legal Advocacy: Push for stricter laws against swatting.
- Support Systems: Establish clear support mechanisms for victims of swatting.

Beyond Punitive/Restorative: These strategies aim to prevent harm proactively and foster a sense of community responsibility.

Conclusion: The transformative justice approach in addressing these online community harms goes beyond punitive and restorative justice by not just focusing on punishment or restoration but by aiming to transform the underlying conditions that lead to such behaviors. By employing a gradient of strategies, the community manager can effectively address both immediate concerns and work towards long-term cultural shifts within the community.

From Reactive to Responsive and Proactive:

1. **From Ban to Bridge:** A member consistently posted provocative comments, leading to multiple warnings. Instead of an outright ban, the community manager reached out for a one-on-one conversation. They discovered that the member felt marginalized and unheard in other spaces and was acting out as a result. The manager then connected the member with a mentor within the community and provided resources on effective communication. Over time, the member became a positive contributor, even assisting in moderating discussions.

2. **Revamping Guidelines:** After several complaints about microaggressions in a community, the manager recognized that the existing guidelines were vague about such behavior. Instead of just penalizing individuals, they initiated a community-wide discussion about microaggressions, leading to a revamped, clearer set of guidelines co-created with community input.

3. **The Feedback Loop:** In a gaming community, several players complained about a specific game mechanic they felt was discriminatory. Instead of dismissing the concerns or punishing the vocal players, the community manager organized a town-hall style meeting with the game developers and the aggrieved players. This not only led to changes in the game but also fostered a sense of collaboration and mutual respect between players and developers.

In conclusion, transformative justice in online community management is not just a reactive approach but a proactive, holistic strategy that focuses on systemic change. By adopting this approach, community managers can foster spaces that are courageous, inclusive, and thriving.

A Recipe for True Change

In the dynamic world of online communities, harmful behaviors can quickly escalate if not addressed promptly and thoughtfully. Transformative justice provides a framework for responding to such behaviors, focusing on healing and restoration rather than punishment. Let's explore a detailed recipe for enacting transformative justice in response to online harm.

1. Identify and Define Behavior:

Begin by clearly identifying the harmful behavior. Whether it's cyberbullying, hate speech, misinformation, or any other form of online harm, it is crucial to understand its characteristics and nuances.

2. Outline Harmful Effects:

Next, assess the detrimental impact of the behavior. This includes emotional distress to the affected individuals, a toxic atmosphere in the community, or a potential ripple effect leading to further harm.

3. Hypothesize on Clues to Intent and Motivation:

Seek to understand the motivations behind the harmful behavior. Is it driven by ignorance, a need for attention, a cry for help, or malicious intent? Deciphering the intent is critical to tailor an appropriate response.

4. Notice Systemic Punitive Reactions:

Often, the immediate reaction to harmful behavior is punitive – suspension, banning, or public shaming. These are often driven by a desire for quick resolution or burnout from continuous moderation.

5. Identify Transformative Justice Strategies:

Instead of punitive measures, explore transformative justice strategies. These can range from low-lift interventions, such as education and mediation, to more intensive efforts like community-led restorative justice circles.

6. Identify Stakeholders and Reorder Strategies:

Engage relevant stakeholders, including community managers, affected individuals, and even perpetrators, to discuss and align on the chosen strategies. This collective buy-in ensures more effective implementation.

7. Implement Transformative Justice Interventions:

Put the chosen strategies into action. This could mean facilitating conversations between conflicting parties, implementing educational programs, or creating spaces for dialogue and healing.

8. Review and Deconstruct Outcomes at Each Level of Impact:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions on a micro (individual), mezzo (community), and macro (societal) level. Did it lead to healing? Did the community grow stronger? Were systemic issues addressed?

9. Share with Peers:

Finally, document and share the experience, the outcomes, and the learnings with peers and other community managers. This ensures that the collective knowledge grows, and communities can learn from each other's successes and challenges.

Example: Addressing Hate Speech

1. Identify and Define: Recognize instances of hate speech.
2. Outline Harmful Effects: Understand the emotional distress caused and potential for a hostile environment.
3. Hypothesize on Intent: Determine if it's ignorance or intentional harm.
4. Notice Punitive Reactions: Recognize tendencies to immediately ban the user.
5. Identify Strategies: Propose interventions like educational resources, mediation, or restorative conversations.
6. Identify Stakeholders: Engage community members, moderators, and the user in question.
7. Implement Interventions: Facilitate a restorative dialogue or share educational materials.
8. Review Outcomes: Evaluate the effectiveness in terms of healing and community strengthening.
9. Share with Peers: Document and share the approach and outcomes for communal learning.

By following this recipe, community managers can transform reactive punitive responses into proactive transformative strategies, creating spaces that are not only safe but also conducive to growth and learning.

Stories of Harmful Behaviors and Transformative Justice

1. Irritating/Annoying:

- Definition: Using repetitive or overwhelming behaviors to cause mild discomfort.
- Harmful Actions: Excessive emojis, off-topic comments.
- Likely Intent: Seeking attention or expression.

- Story 1:
 - Taylor noticed Alice annoying members with excessive emojis. The company and community wanted immediate intervention, while moderators suggested warnings.
 - Punitive Reactions: Warnings, restricting posts.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Introducing a "Creative Expression Day".
 - Stakeholders: Company, Taylor (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Alice (Member), community members.
 - Buy-in: Taylor explained how this approach fosters creativity and engagement. Moderators and the community agreed.
 - Results: Short-term relief from irritation; long-term community engagement increased.

- Story 2:
 - Bob posted off-topic comments, annoying members. The company, community, and moderators wanted it stopped.
 - Punitive Reactions: Warnings, thread restrictions.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Implementing a "Free Talk Friday".
 - Stakeholders: Company, Taylor (CM), Moderators, Bob (Member), community members.
 - Buy-in: Taylor emphasized the channeling of enthusiasm positively. All stakeholders agreed.
 - Results: Immediate reduction in off-topic posts; long-term increase in community cohesion.

2. Crashing/Spamming:

- Definition: Overloading systems to disrupt normal functioning.
- Harmful Actions: Flooding chats, spam links.
- Likely Intent: Disruption for amusement.

- Story 1:
 - Jordan, the community manager, observed Chris crashing chats by posting numerous spam links. Chris's intent seemed to be driving traffic to his own monetized content. The company

feared reputation damage and potential loss of users. Moderators, both volunteer and paid, and the community were frustrated and demanded immediate punitive actions such as bans.

- Punitive Reactions: Banning, temporary suspension.
- Transformative Justice Strategies: Implementing spam filters, educating users on discerning content, and creating a dedicated space for promotions.
- Stakeholders: Company executives, Jordan (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Chris (Member), community members.
- Buy-in: Jordan acknowledged stakeholders' concerns and explained that implementing filters and education would foster a resilient environment without stifling genuine promotion. The transformative approach was accepted.
- Results: Immediate reduction in disruptive spam; long-term resilience, user awareness, and structured promotional activities increased.

- Story 2:

- Chris sent spam links to gain followers for his affiliate marketing. Users found this intrusive and disruptive. The company wanted to protect its brand image, while moderators and the community demanded punitive actions.
- Punitive Reactions: Account suspension, warnings.
- Transformative Justice Strategies: Enhanced security measures, user guidelines, and introducing a "Promote Your Work" day.
- Stakeholders: Company executives, Jordan (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Chris (Member), community members.
- Buy-in: Jordan addressed stakeholders' concerns, emphasizing that enhanced security and guidelines coupled with promotional days would ensure fair opportunities for all. Stakeholders supported the approach.
- Results: Immediate reduction in spam links; long-term secure, informed, and engaged community.

3. Trolling:

- Definition: Engaging in provocative, offensive, or disruptive behavior targeting others' diversity characteristics.

- Harmful Actions: Offensive comments, derailing discussions.
- Likely Intent: To marginalize, seek attention, assume consent due to platform usage.

- Story 1:

- Alex, a community manager, noticed Taylor consistently trolling members in a gaming environment. Taylor believed that other players implicitly consented to such behavior by being on the platform. The company was worried about maintaining a safe environment, while moderators and the community were distressed and sought punitive actions.
- Punitive Reactions: Immediate ban, warnings.
- Transformative Justice Strategies: Establishing clear guidelines, holding community discussions on respectful communication, and implementing stricter moderation tools.

- Stakeholders: Company executives, Alex (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Taylor (Member), community members.
- Buy-in: Alex recognized stakeholders' frustrations and proposed a transformative approach that would foster respectful interaction while maintaining engagement. This was accepted.
- Results: Immediate cessation of trolling incidents; long-term development of a respectful and engaged community.

- Story 2:
 - Taylor, under the guise of humor, made derogatory comments. Alex, the community manager, understood the company's desire for a positive environment and the moderators' and community's desire for swift action.
 - Punitive Reactions: Account suspension, public shaming.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Educative sessions, a warning system, and creating inclusive gaming experiences.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Alex (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Taylor (Member), community members.
 - Buy-in: Alex emphasized that transforming the environment would create lasting change and inclusivity. The stakeholders agreed.
 - Results: Short-term reduction in derogatory comments; long-term establishment of an inclusive and respectful community.

4. Griefing:

- Definition: Deliberately causing annoyance to others within an online community.
- Harmful Actions: Disrupting gameplay, causing inconvenience.
- Likely Intent: To seek amusement at others' expense.

- Story 1:
 - Morgan, a community manager, observed Jordan constantly causing grief to other players. The company was concerned about user experience, while moderators and the community were annoyed and sought punitive measures.
 - Punitive Reactions: Temporary or permanent bans.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Implementation of user-friendly reporting systems, community education on fair gameplay, and structured gaming sessions.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Morgan (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Jordan (Member), community members.
 - Buy-in: Morgan communicated that addressing the root causes would create a fair and enjoyable environment. Stakeholders were convinced.
 - Results: Immediate decrease in griefing incidents; long-term fostering of fair play and user satisfaction.

- Story 2:

- Jordan was persistently causing annoyance. Morgan, the community manager, realized the company's interest in minimizing user attrition, and the moderators' and community's desire for punitive action.
- Punitive Reactions: Account suspension, verbal warnings.
- Transformative Justice Strategies: Introduction of an honor system, educative webinars, and active engagement initiatives.
- Stakeholders: Company executives, Morgan (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Jordan (Member), community members.
- Buy-in: Morgan proposed that fostering a sense of responsibility and honor would encourage positive behavior. Stakeholders agreed.
- Results: Short-term reduction in grieving incidents; long-term cultivation of a responsible and engaged community.

5. Bullying:

- Definition: Targeting someone based on their unique, non-negotiable identities repetitively.
- Harmful Actions: Personal attacks, humiliation.
- Likely Intent: To exert power and control.
- Story 1:
 - Chris, a community manager, noticed Jamie repeatedly bullying Alex based on their unique identity. The company was eager to maintain a safe space, and moderators and the community were angered and sought punitive action against Jamie.
 - Punitive Reactions: Banning Jamie, public condemnation.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Mediation, introducing anti-bullying campaigns, and community education.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Chris (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Jamie (Member), Alex (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Chris acknowledged stakeholders' initial anger but highlighted the benefits of a transformative approach that could change behaviors and attitudes. Stakeholders were convinced.
 - Results: Immediate reduction in bullying; long-term development of a respectful community culture.
- Story 2:
 - Jamie continued to target Alex. Chris understood the company's interest in user retention, and the moderators' and community's desire for swift action against Jamie.
 - Punitive Reactions: Suspension, warnings.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Establishing support systems for victims, inclusivity training, and creating safer reporting channels.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Chris (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Jamie (Member), Alex (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Chris proposed a transformative justice approach, emphasizing long-term positive change. Stakeholders agreed.

- Results: Short-term decrease in bullying incidents; long-term establishment of a supportive and inclusive community.

6. Hating:

- Definition: Utilizing hate speech to target someone's diversity.
- Harmful Actions: Derogatory comments, hate speech.
- Likely Intent: To marginalize and discriminate.
- Story 1:
 - Sam, a community manager, observed Taylor using hate speech against Jordan. The company wanted to preserve its reputation, while moderators and the community were outraged and demanded punitive action.
 - Punitive Reactions: Immediate ban, public denouncement.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Implementing strict guidelines, awareness campaigns, and educational content.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Sam (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Taylor (Member), Jordan (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Sam recognized the stakeholders' anger but suggested a transformative approach focusing on lasting change. Stakeholders were persuaded.
 - Results: Immediate decline in hate speech incidents; long-term fostering of a respectful community.
- Story 2:
 - Taylor continued to use hate speech. Sam acknowledged the company's concern about its image, and the moderators' and community's push for punitive measures.
 - Punitive Reactions: Account suspension, warnings.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Introducing cultural sensitivity sessions, implementing AI moderation tools, and regular community check-ins.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Sam (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Taylor (Member), Jordan (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Sam proposed transformative justice strategies emphasizing long-term community well-being. Stakeholders agreed.
 - Results: Short-term reduction in hate speech; long-term cultivation of a tolerant and inclusive community.

7. Harassing:

- Definition: Persistently targeting someone across multiple platforms with the intent to drive them away.
- Harmful Actions: Persistent negative comments, messages, and public humiliation.
- Likely Intent: To ostracize and exert control.
- Story 1:

- Alex, a community manager, noticed Jordan constantly harassing Taylor across different forums. The company was concerned about user experience, while moderators and community members were angered and sought immediate action.
 - Punitive Reactions: Banning Jordan, public condemnation.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Implementing anti-harassment policies, facilitating dialogue, and creating support networks for victims.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Alex (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Jordan (Harasser), Taylor (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Alex acknowledged stakeholders' immediate reactions but suggested a transformative justice approach for sustained impact. Stakeholders agreed.
 - Results: Immediate reduction in harassment incidents; long-term nurturing of a supportive community.
-
- Story 2:
 - Jordan escalated the harassment against Taylor. Alex understood the company's focus on retaining users, and moderators' and community's desire for punitive measures.
 - Punitive Reactions: Temporary suspension, warnings.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Strengthening reporting mechanisms, proactive monitoring, and community education on harassment.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Alex (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Jordan (Harasser), Taylor (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Alex suggested transformative justice strategies, emphasizing their long-term benefits. Stakeholders were convinced.
 - Results: Short-term decline in harassment; long-term development of a respectful and vigilant community.

8. Stalking:

- Definition: Monitoring someone's behaviors and patterns with harmful intent.
 - Harmful Actions: Tracking online activity, collecting personal information.
 - Likely Intent: To exert control and invoke fear.
-
- Story 1:
 - Sam, a community manager, identified Chris stalking Jamie online. The company was concerned about privacy, while moderators and the community were alarmed and wanted immediate action.
 - Punitive Reactions: Banning Chris, public warnings.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Implementing stringent privacy settings, educating community on online safety.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Sam (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Chris (Stalker), Jamie (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Sam addressed stakeholders' concerns and proposed transformative justice strategies for long-term safety. Stakeholders agreed.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Results: Immediate halt in stalking incidents; long-term establishment of a secure and vigilant community.
- Story 2:
 - Chris continued stalking Jamie. Sam acknowledged company concerns regarding user trust, and moderators' and community's calls for punitive action.
 - Punitive Reactions: Temporary suspension, privacy alerts.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Enhanced privacy tools, community workshops on cyber safety.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Sam (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Chris (Stalker), Jamie (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Sam proposed transformative justice strategies, emphasizing user safety and community well-being. Stakeholders concurred.
 - Results: Short-term prevention of stalking; long-term fostering of a privacy-conscious community.

9. Doxing:

- Definition: Publicizing someone's personal information with harmful intent.
- Harmful Actions: Releasing personal data like addresses, contact details.
- Likely Intent: To intimidate and violate privacy.
- Story 1:
 - Alex, a community manager, noticed Sam doxing Jordan. The company was concerned about legal implications, while moderators and the community were outraged and sought strict action.
 - Punitive Reactions: Permanent ban, public condemnation.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Strengthening data protection policies, community education on doxing consequences.
 - Stakeholders: Company executives, Alex (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Sam (Doxer), Jordan (Victim), community members.
 - Buy-in: Alex acknowledged the stakeholders' initial reactions but advocated for transformative justice approaches for long-lasting change. Stakeholders were swayed.
 - Results: Immediate cessation of doxing incidents; long-term development of a privacy-respecting community.
- Story 2:
 - Sam escalated attempts to dox Jordan. Alex recognized the company's concern about user trust and moderators' and community's push for punitive action.
 - Punitive Reactions
 - : Temporary suspension, stern warnings.
 - Transformative Justice Strategies: Introducing secure verification processes, awareness campaigns against doxing.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Stakeholders: Company executives, Alex (CM), Moderators (volunteer and paid), Sam (Doxer), Jordan (Victim), community members.
- Buy-in: Alex proposed transformative justice strategies emphasizing long-term user security. Stakeholders agreed.
- Results: Short-term reduction in doxing incidents; long-term cultivation of a security-aware community.

By adopting a transformative justice approach, online community managers can ensure a more respectful, inclusive, and harmonious environment, addressing not just the symptoms but the root causes of harmful behaviors.

10. Swatting

11. Dog Whistling

****Punitive Justice Lens:****

From a punitive perspective, dogwhistling would be addressed by implementing strict penalties for those who engage in such behavior. This could involve warnings, temporary bans, or permanent removal from the community platform. The goal would be to punish the behavior to deter the individual and others from repeating the offense. This approach focuses on the violation of community guidelines and the imposition of sanctions to maintain order and discourage harmful conduct.

****Restorative Justice Lens:****

Restorative justice would approach dogwhistling with the aim of repairing harm and restoring community relationships. It would involve identifying the impact of the dogwhistling, facilitating a dialogue between the affected parties, and finding a way to make amends. This might include public apologies, educational sessions about the harmful effects of such coded language, and commitments to change behavior. The focus is on understanding and acknowledging the harm caused, and taking steps to heal the community.

****Transformative Justice Lens:****

Through a transformative justice lens, the response to dogwhistling would go beyond addressing the individual incident to examine and change the underlying social structures that allow for such behavior. This would include a critical look at community norms, power dynamics, and the systemic issues that may perpetuate exclusion or marginalization. Efforts might include community-wide education programs, revising community guidelines to be more inclusive, and creating more equitable platforms for dialogue and engagement. The aim is to transform the conditions that led to the dogwhistling in the first place, promoting long-term change and fostering an environment where such behavior is no longer tolerated or possible.

Transformative Justice and Conflict Resiliency

In the vast digital expanse of the internet, online communities are akin to dynamic ecosystems, each with its unique set of challenges, behaviors, and interactions. Within this intricate web, conflicts and harm are inevitable. The question that arises is: How do we respond? Do we merely address the surface-level manifestations of these conflicts, or do we delve deeper, aiming for profound, lasting change? Enter the concepts of Transformative Justice and Conflict Resiliency.

Transformative Justice vs. Restorative Justice:

At a glance, Restorative Justice appears to be the ideal approach. After all, it concentrates on mending the harm caused and rejuvenating relationships. It serves as a bridge, rebuilding the fractured bonds between individuals. However, is repairing enough? Transformative Justice posits that it's not. While Restorative Justice patches the visible cracks, Transformative Justice reconstructs the very foundation. It endeavors to change the deep-rooted structures and mindsets that allowed the harm to occur in the first place. The objective is clear: not just to address isolated incidents of harm but to cultivate a community that proactively deters such behaviors from arising.

Conflict Resiliency vs. Conflict Resolution:

Similarly, when we talk about conflicts, the traditional approach has been to resolve them. Conflict Resolution, as the name suggests, is about finding a solution or a middle ground. But what if we could do more than just resolve? What if we could prepare and fortify our community for inevitable future conflicts? This is where Conflict Resiliency comes into play. Instead of merely extinguishing the flames of conflict, it aims to fireproof the community. By emphasizing Conflict Resiliency, we're investing in enhancing the community's ability to navigate, adapt to, and evolve from conflicts. The goal is a community that doesn't just survive conflicts but thrives amidst them, ensuring enduring stability and unity.

In essence, the journey from reaction to response in online communities is a transformative one. By championing Transformative Justice and Conflict Resiliency, we're not just putting out fires; we're redesigning the very architecture of our communities to be fire-resistant. We're aspiring for a digital space that is not only harmonious and respectful but also robust, adaptable, and ever-evolving.

Section 2: Transformative Justice Starts with Me

Understanding how Preferences and Unconscious Bias lead to Discrimination, Prejudice, and Systemic Oppression



Introduction:

In the intricate tapestry of human interactions, the threads of preferences, biases, prejudices, discrimination, and oppression are often interwoven, creating patterns that deeply impact our societies. Each term, although related, represents a distinct stage in the gradient of understanding and behavior, especially in the realm of online community management.

Recognizing and dissecting these stages is paramount for fostering inclusivity and combating systemic injustices.

Preferences

Preferences are the most benign in this gradient. They are natural inclinations or tendencies toward certain things over others, such as a favorite color or type of music. In the digital realm, preferences might be as simple as choosing one online platform over another. They're subjective, personal, and don't inherently harm or marginalize others.

Biases

However, when preferences are influenced by societal norms or stereotypes, they can evolve into biases. Biases are unconscious leanings or preconceived notions about groups of people based on characteristics like race, gender, age, or religion. For an online community manager, biases might manifest in subtle ways, like favoring content from certain users without any objective reason.

Prejudices

When biases become conscious and are coupled with negative attitudes or beliefs, they transform into prejudices. Prejudices are pre-formed judgments, often rooted in misinformation or stereotypes. In online communities, prejudices can influence the way users perceive and interact with individuals from different backgrounds, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Discrimination

Discrimination takes prejudice a step further, translating negative beliefs into actions. Discrimination involves treating someone unfairly or unjustly based on their group, class, or category. In online spaces, this could mean excluding certain individuals from discussions, promoting divisive content, or creating barriers to participation based on biases.

Oppression

At the extreme end of the gradient lies oppression. Oppression is the systemic and pervasive mistreatment of one group by another, reinforced by societal power dynamics. In the digital world, oppression might manifest as consistent harassment of marginalized groups, silencing their voices, or implementing policies that disproportionately affect them negatively.

Understanding this gradient is crucial for anyone navigating online communities, especially community managers. By recognizing where they stand on this spectrum, they can better address underlying issues, fostering environments that are not only tolerant but actively inclusive. As we delve deeper into the realm of community management, we'll explore strategies to combat these negative behaviors, emphasizing the transformative power of awareness, education, and action.

Chapter 1: Acknowledging Personal Biases



Introduction:

Acknowledging one's personal biases is a crucial first step towards building empathetic and inclusive online communities. These biases, which often operate under the radar of our conscious minds, can influence our decisions, interactions, and the spaces we curate. This chapter delves into the process of identifying, understanding, and addressing personal biases, which is fundamental for community managers aspiring to foster truly inclusive spaces.

The Nature of Bias:

Biases are the filters through which we see the world. They are the product of our upbringing, experiences, culture, and the society in which we live. They can manifest in various forms such as affinity bias, where we favor those who resemble ourselves, or confirmation bias, where we seek out information that aligns with our pre-existing beliefs. These biases are not inherently malicious but can lead to unfairness and exclusion when left unchecked.

Acknowledging Biases in Online Community Management:

In the context of online community management, biases can influence decisions ranging from content moderation to user engagement strategies. For instance, a community manager might unknowingly favor content from users who share similar backgrounds or viewpoints, thereby limiting the diversity of voices represented in the space.

Self-Reflection and Mindful Observation:

The journey to acknowledging personal biases begins with introspection. It requires community managers to adopt a mindset of continuous self-reflection and learning. By actively seeking feedback, observing one's reactions, and questioning the rationale behind decisions, community managers can start identifying patterns that may indicate biases at play.

Tools and Techniques for Unearthing Biases:

Various tools and techniques can aid in uncovering biases. Implicit Association Tests (IAT), for instance, can help in identifying unconscious biases. Engaging in diversity training, reading literature from diverse perspectives, and actively seeking to understand the experiences of marginalized communities can also be beneficial.

Creating a Bias Journal:

Maintaining a 'Bias Journal' can be an effective strategy for community managers. Documenting instances where bias might have influenced a decision and reflecting on the outcomes can lead to greater self-awareness and accountability.

Transforming Awareness into Action:

Acknowledging biases is just the beginning. The next step is to actively work towards mitigating their effects. This can involve implementing fair moderation policies, diversifying community engagement, and being open to learning and unlearning.

Educational Exploration:

Knowledge is the tool with which we combat ignorance. As community managers, our commitment to learning helps us bridge gaps and understand diverse perspectives. This might involve attending workshops, reading articles, and listening to podcasts that challenge our existing beliefs. It's like being an explorer, charting unknown territories, and discovering new landscapes. Every piece of new information adds another layer to our understanding, enriching our approach to community management.

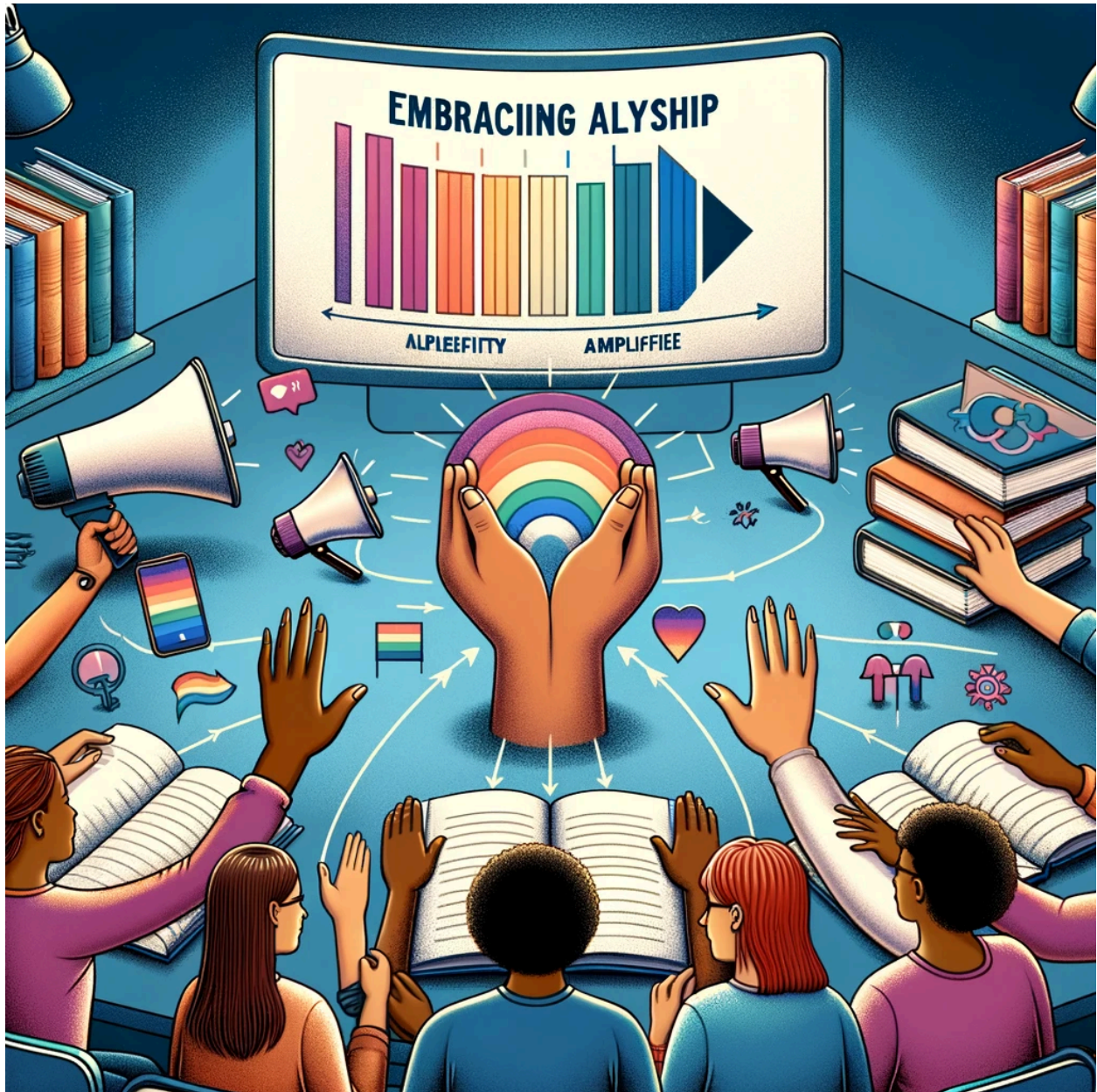
Letting Go of Preconceived Notions:

As we embark on our educational journey, we'll inevitably confront beliefs that need to be unlearned. This process can be uncomfortable, but it's essential. By actively challenging and shedding these biases, we create a mental space for more inclusive thoughts. It's akin to spring cleaning, where we declutter our minds, making room for fresh perspectives that align with our goals of inclusivity.

Embracing Allyship:

Allyship goes beyond mere support; it's a proactive stance. As community managers, we have a unique platform to amplify marginalized voices. This means actively seeking out those voices, listening to their concerns, and leveraging our influence to make their messages heard. It's a dance of humility and action, where we step back to let others lead while ensuring they have the stage to do so. Next we'll explore in greater detail the steps of accompliceship, allyship, and becoming a co-conspirator to change the system.

Chapter 2: Embracing Allyship



Recognizing and Challenging Our Own Biases

Allyship begins with introspection. For community managers, this means acknowledging and actively working against biases that might influence their moderation decisions or community engagement strategies. Everyone has biases, and it's essential to recognize them rather than deny their existence. By understanding how biases shape our perspectives and actions, community managers can create more equitable and welcoming online spaces.

For instance, a community manager might realize that they have unconscious biases related to age, assuming that older community members may not be as tech-savvy as younger ones. Recognizing this bias allows the manager to challenge this assumption and ensure that their community is accessible and welcoming to people of all ages. Regular self-reflection and training can be instrumental in identifying and mitigating biases.

Challenging biases is an ongoing process and requires community managers to be open to feedback and committed to personal growth. By actively seeking out and addressing biases, community managers can foster online communities that truly embody the principles of equality and respect.

The concept of allyship is akin to a supportive partnership where individuals with privilege and power stand alongside marginalized groups in the pursuit of justice and equality. Allyship isn't a static title one earns but a dynamic and evolving practice. It requires a conscious commitment to learning, growing, and taking consistent action. In the realm of online community management, this means ensuring that digital spaces are inclusive and respectful, fostering environments where diverse voices are heard and validated.

In online communities, allyship can take the form of amplifying marginalized voices, advocating for equitable policies, and challenging instances of discrimination. Community managers, as stewards of these spaces, have a unique role in modeling allyship behaviors, thus setting a tone that encourages others to follow suit. However, it's crucial to understand that allyship doesn't mean speaking for others; instead, it's about creating spaces where everyone can speak for themselves.

Allyship in the digital world is not just a moral imperative but also a practical one. Communities that embrace diversity and inclusivity tend to be richer, more vibrant, and more innovative. When people from different backgrounds and experiences come together, they bring with them a wealth of perspectives that can lead to creative problem-solving and a more engaging community experience.

Accompliceship & Allyship

In the realm of online community management, individuals often embark on the journey from being unconscious accomplices to becoming conscious and committed allies. Accompliceship, as a dormant and hidden stage of allyship, refers to a state where community managers may unknowingly perpetuate or passively accept the status quo of systemic disparities and oppression. It's a space where one may have well-intentioned motives but inadvertently contributes to reinforcing oppressive forces. By contrast, allyship represents a deliberate and informed choice to support marginalized groups actively, using one's privilege to challenge and

change the system. To evolve from being an unconscious accomplice to a conscious ally, community managers must recognize, question, and transform their behaviors and approaches.

1. Understanding Accompliceship: The Dormant Stage

Accompliceship is often a dormant phase where community managers, despite their best intentions, may inadvertently play a role in maintaining and reinforcing systemic biases. The online space, with its anonymity and far-reaching influence, can sometimes escalate these disparities unknowingly. For instance, a community manager might unconsciously favor certain demographics while moderating content or overlook the nuances in diverse user experiences. This dormant stage can be a critical learning point. By identifying and acknowledging their unconscious biases, community managers can move towards more inclusive practices.

2. Evolving into an Ally: Conscious Efforts

The evolution from an accomplice to an ally involves a series of conscious efforts and continuous learning. It means stepping beyond good intentions and actively working to support underrepresented voices. For instance, an ally community manager might enforce guidelines that promote inclusivity, actively seek out and uplift voices that are typically marginalized, and continuously educate themselves on issues faced by different communities. By doing so, they ensure that their platforms are not just spaces for communication but also for advocacy and support.

3. Allyship as an Ongoing Commitment

Allyship is not a static badge of honor but a dynamic and ongoing commitment to using one's privilege to dismantle oppressive systems. Community managers should view allyship as a continuous journey of learning, unlearning, and relearning. This involves staying informed about social issues, listening to marginalized voices, and adapting community guidelines to be more inclusive. Being an ally means being ready to make mistakes, learn from them, and persistently work towards creating a more equitable online space.

4. Accompliceship to Allyship: Strategies for Community Managers

To transform from unconscious accomplices to conscious allies, community managers can employ several strategies. This includes undergoing training in unconscious bias, actively seeking feedback from diverse community members, and regularly updating guidelines to

ensure inclusivity. For instance, implementing features that allow for content customization based on user preferences can create a more welcoming environment for all users.

5. The Role of Community Managers in Systemic Change

Community managers, as gatekeepers and facilitators of online spaces, play a pivotal role in bringing about systemic change. When community managers step up as allies, they contribute to creating a ripple effect of positive change that can transform the entire online landscape. By actively challenging biases, oppressive norms, and discriminatory practices, they can help foster communities that are more inclusive, respectful, and empathetic.

6. Real-Life Implications and Case Studies

Understanding the transformation from accompliceship to allyship can be enriched by examining real-life case studies. For example, a community manager who once allowed biased content to proliferate might undergo training and subsequently implement stricter moderation policies. Another might transition from being passive about diversity issues to actively promoting marginalized voices.

7. Challenges and Continuous Growth

The journey from accompliceship to allyship is fraught with challenges, including resistance from the community, personal biases, and the constant evolution of social norms. However, it's important for community managers to view these challenges as opportunities for continuous growth and learning. By doing so, they ensure that their platforms evolve to become spaces of support, advocacy, and inclusivity.

Conclusion: From Accompliceship to Allyship – A Continuous Journey

In conclusion, embracing allyship in online community management is a transformative journey that extends beyond mere conflict resolution to fostering conflict resilience. It requires community managers to move from being unconscious accomplices, who may inadvertently perpetuate biases, to becoming conscious allies actively working towards inclusivity and equity. By acknowledging the dormant stage of accompliceship and actively working towards becoming allies, community managers can ensure that online spaces are not just platforms for communication but also for advocacy, support, and systemic change.

Accompliceship, while often viewed as a dormant stage of allyship, can also be conceptualized as a hidden space of co-conspiratorship. In this context, accompliceship represents a crucial phase where burned-out allies retreat to recover, recharge, and covertly organize before re-emerging to stand alongside others in taking disruptive action.

Accompliceship as Co-Conspiratorship:

In the realm of online community management, conscious accompliceship as co-conspiratorship is akin to a behind-the-scenes strategizing phase. Community managers in this stage may take a step back from overt activism but continue to work covertly in supporting transformative changes. This could involve engaging in subtle acts of resistance, such as quietly amending community guidelines to be more inclusive or silently supporting allies who are taking visible actions. The covert nature of accompliceship allows these community managers to regroup and strategize without drawing attention to themselves.

Accompliceship as Self-Care and Renewal:

Burnout is a common occurrence among allies who tirelessly strive for social justice and inclusivity in online spaces. Accompliceship can serve as a vital period of self-care and renewal where community managers rejuvenate their spirits and rekindle their passion for advocacy. By temporarily retreating from the front lines, they can focus on personal well-being, thereby ensuring their long-term commitment to the cause.

Strategic Retreat and Covert Organization:

Accompliceship can be seen as a strategic retreat that enables community managers to engage in covert organization. Here, they might collaborate with other like-minded individuals behind the scenes, developing new strategies and planning future disruptive actions. This phase ensures that when they re-emerge as allies, they do so with renewed vigor and well-thought-out plans, ready to make a significant impact.

The Synergy Between Conscious Accompliceship and Allyship:

Ultimately, conscious accompliceship and allyship are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary states in the continuous journey towards transformative justice. Accompliceship allows for reflection, strategic planning, and self-care, while allyship involves visible and disruptive action. Both are essential for sustainable advocacy and for fostering resilient and inclusive online communities.

In conclusion, recognizing accomplices as both a covert space for strategizing and a necessary pause for self-care allows for a more nuanced understanding of the allyship journey. By acknowledging and respecting the importance of this stage, online community managers can ensure a sustainable and impactful approach to fostering inclusive and equitable spaces.

Practical Steps for Community Managers

Embracing allyship as a community manager involves practical steps. First, educating oneself about diverse identities and experiences is crucial. This can involve reading, participating in training sessions, or engaging in conversations that broaden one's understanding. Secondly, implementing inclusive community guidelines and policies that explicitly condemn discriminatory behaviors and promote respectful interactions is essential.

Community managers can also foster allyship by creating spaces within their communities for marginalized voices to be heard and celebrated. This could include hosting discussions, spotlighting diverse creators, or actively seeking feedback from underrepresented community members.

Finally, community managers must be prepared to hold themselves and their communities accountable. When mistakes are made, it's important to acknowledge them, learn from them, and take corrective action. Consistent, transparent communication and a commitment to continuous improvement are hallmarks of effective allyship in community management.

Conclusion

Embracing allyship in online community management is an ongoing journey of learning, reflection, and action. By acknowledging personal biases, understanding the spectrum from unconscious accomplices to allyship, and taking practical steps to foster inclusivity, community managers can play a pivotal role in creating digital spaces that are welcoming and respectful to all. In doing so, they not only contribute to social justice but also enhance the vibrancy and richness of their communities.

The journey of allyship is nuanced and complex, and well-intentioned allies can sometimes find themselves navigating a delicate balance between being perceived as too disruptive or too passive. Both extremes come with their own set of pitfalls, and understanding these challenges is crucial for effective advocacy in online community management.

Pitfalls of Allyship:

Being Perceived as Too Disruptive or Aggressive

1. **Backlash and Alienation:** Allies who are very vocal and disruptive in their advocacy may face backlash from those who disagree or feel threatened by their calls for change. This can lead to alienation within the community, making it harder for the ally to foster dialogue and understanding.
2. **Misrepresentation of Intent:** Sometimes, an ally's passion can be misconstrued as aggression, leading to misunderstandings. The message they are trying to convey may get lost amidst perceptions of hostility.
3. **Burnout:** Allies who consistently take on a confrontational role may experience quicker burnout. The emotional toll of constantly being on the front lines can be draining.
4. **Overshadowing Marginalized Voices:** In their eagerness to support, allies might inadvertently dominate conversations, unintentionally overshadowing the voices of those they are trying to uplift.

Being Perceived as Too Passive or Covert:

1. **Perception of Inaction:** Allies who adopt a more covert approach, acting as co-conspirators or accomplices, may be perceived as inactive or uncommitted to the cause. This can lead to frustration among community members who expect visible action.
2. **Undermining Trust:** If an ally's behind-the-scenes efforts are not visible, it may lead to mistrust among community members who question their dedication to fostering inclusivity.
3. **Missed Opportunities for Change:** Being too passive might mean that certain opportunities for advocacy and transformative change are missed.
4. **Compromised Influence:** Allies who are perceived as too passive might find that their influence is diminished when they do decide to take a stand.

Navigating the Balance:

For an ally in the realm of online community management, striving for practice instead of perfection is crucial. Being aware of these pitfalls allows community managers to recalibrate their approach as needed.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Responsive Adaptation: Allies can practice responsive adaptation by gauging the community's needs and adjusting their level of visibility and engagement accordingly.
- Transparent Communication: Allies can foster trust by being transparent about their efforts, whether they are working overtly or covertly.
- Continuous Learning: By continuously learning and seeking feedback, allies can avoid overshadowing marginalized voices and ensure that their advocacy is respectful and effective.
- Self-Reflection: Regular self-reflection can help allies identify when they may be veering towards either extreme and adjust their approach accordingly.

In conclusion, understanding the pitfalls of allyship is a step towards more effective and empathetic advocacy. By being mindful of these challenges, community managers can navigate the complex landscape of online communities with sensitivity and resilience, fostering spaces that are inclusive and equitable.

Chapter 3. Stepping Up as Co-Conspirators:



Being a co-conspirator involves a deeper level of commitment. It's not just about advocating for change but actively participating in bringing about that change. For community managers, this could mean pushing for policy reforms, challenging discriminatory content, or collaborating with organizations that align with the community's values. It's akin to joining hands with others, creating a collective force that pushes against the tide of inequality.

Moving beyond allyship, a co-conspirator in online community management actively seeks to dismantle systems of oppression, using their privilege to challenge and change the status quo. This chapter will delve into the transformative role of co-conspirators in community management, understanding the nuances of this role, and discussing actionable steps for community managers to foster a culture of inclusivity and advocacy.

Understanding the Shift from Ally to Co-Conspirator

The distinction between an ally and a co-conspirator is one of action and commitment. While an ally supports marginalized individuals and groups, a co-conspirator goes a step further to actively disrupt oppressive systems. In online communities, this means that a community manager not only voices support for marginalized users but takes tangible steps to challenge discriminatory norms and behaviors.

This shift requires a deep understanding of the systemic roots of oppression and a readiness to leverage one's position for change. For instance, a community manager might actively challenge harmful content, influence policy changes, and create avenues for marginalized voices to be heard and respected. The transformation from an ally to a co-conspirator is marked by this proactive stance against injustice.

Strategies for Co-Conspirators in Online Communities

Co-conspirators in online community management employ a range of strategies to dismantle oppressive structures. Firstly, they actively listen and learn from marginalized voices, amplifying their concerns. This involves creating safe spaces for dialogue and ensuring that these conversations influence policy and community culture.

Secondly, co-conspirators use their influence to advocate for structural changes. This could involve implementing more inclusive community guidelines, moderating content that perpetuates bias, or lobbying for technological changes that address inequities. For instance, implementing features that allow for greater content control and personalization to protect users from harassment.

Lastly, co-conspirators are vigilant and persistent. They continuously educate themselves and the community, addressing issues head-on, and iterating on strategies for inclusivity. They understand that being a co-conspirator is an ongoing commitment to justice and equity.

The Impact of Co-Conspiratorship in Online Communities

The role of a co-conspirator in community management can be transformative. By actively challenging and changing oppressive systems, co-conspirators can foster communities that are not only inclusive but also actively resist discrimination and bias.

For instance, a community manager who acts as a co-conspirator can turn a platform from a passive space to one of active advocacy and support. This shift can lead to the development of a community culture that is not only tolerant but actively seeks to uplift all voices, particularly those that are marginalized.

In the long term, the impact of co-conspiratorship can ripple beyond the online space, influencing real-world perceptions and actions. By fostering such a proactive culture, online communities can become catalysts for broader societal change.

Case Studies: Co-Conspiratorship in Action

Several online communities exemplify the principles of co-conspiratorship. In one instance, a community manager utilized their platform to raise awareness about mental health issues, actively challenging stigmas and providing resources. They engaged mental health professionals to contribute and ensured the community was a safe space for open dialogue.

Becoming a community manager was inspired out of necessity when a platform didn't meet the needs of the community. A grassroots community manager in Portland Oregon found that a social platform was unable to provide tools needed to organize on the ground community resources being gathered for local under-served populations, so they organized programmers and created [their own platform](#) and then moved thousands of people over to it.

In another instance a gaming streamer and influencer experienced pervasive sexism and misogyny and eventually became a community leader and started an organization, [Feminist Frequency](#), to address toxic harm in gaming communities and developer communities. She took a stand against toxic gaming communities at every level by creating a hotline for gaming developer abuses. She not only moderated sexist content strictly but also initiated a movement around respect and inclusivity. By actively seeking to change the community culture, they moved beyond allyship to co-conspiratorship with a much wider audience.

Conclusion

Embracing the role of a co-conspirator in online community management is about proactive advocacy and tangible action. It involves recognizing one's own privilege and using it to challenge and change oppressive systems. By actively seeking justice and inclusivity, community managers can transform online spaces into platforms for advocacy, support, and societal change.

Chapter 4. Cycling Through Disruption:



Change is a continuous process. As community managers, our commitment to equity should be an evolving cycle of learning, unlearning, and acting. With every new challenge, we reassess our strategies, ensuring they're in tune with the community's needs. This iterative approach ensures that we're not static but dynamic forces of positive change.

Introduction to Disruption

Disruption in the context of community management is the conscious act of challenging and breaking down harmful norms, systems, and practices that perpetuate biases and inequality. It is an iterative process that requires continuous self-reflection, learning, and action. Online community managers need to understand that disrupting established patterns is not a one-time event but a cycle that must be revisited regularly to ensure sustained positive impact. This cyclical approach helps in refining strategies and tools for more impactful disruption.

Understanding that the work of disruption is continuous is vital for community managers. It requires consistent effort, resilience, and adaptability. The cycle of disruption includes assessing the current community climate, identifying areas of concern, implementing strategies for change, evaluating the impact, and recalibrating efforts. Disruption may sometimes be met with resistance or backlash, making it important for community managers to be prepared for these challenges and to stay committed to fostering inclusive spaces.

The Cycle of Disruption

The cycle of disruption begins with Awareness, where community managers recognize the existence of biases and inequalities within their community. This is followed by Preparation, involving continuous learning, and equipping oneself with knowledge and tools needed to address these issues. The Action phase involves implementing strategies aimed at disrupting harmful norms and practices. Reflection involves assessing the outcomes and understanding the impact of the actions taken. Lastly, the Iteration phase involves refining strategies and beginning the cycle anew.

Awareness is the first step in the cycle of disruption. Community managers must be vigilant and observant of any harmful behaviors, biases, or disparities within their communities. This could range from subtle microaggressions to overt acts of discrimination. Awareness involves not only recognizing individual acts of bias but also understanding systemic issues that may be ingrained in the community culture.

Preparation involves community managers arming themselves with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to address the issues identified. This could involve undergoing training, seeking mentorship, or researching best practices. Preparation is also about understanding the nuances of the community dynamics and anticipating potential resistance.

Action is the phase where community managers implement strategies to disrupt harmful norms. This could involve creating inclusive policies, addressing harmful behavior head-on, or amplifying marginalized voices. The action phase is crucial and often requires courage as it may challenge the status quo.

Reflection allows community managers to assess the impact of their actions. This could involve soliciting feedback from community members, analyzing community engagement metrics, or reflecting on personal experiences. Reflection is crucial for understanding what worked well and what could be improved.

Iteration involves refining strategies based on the reflections and feedback, and starting the cycle of disruption anew. Community managers may need to tweak their approaches, try new strategies, or focus on different areas of concern.

Strategies for Disruption

Community managers can employ various strategies to disrupt harmful norms. These may include Educative Interventions, where they create learning opportunities for community members to understand biases and discrimination. Policy Reform involves reassessing and modifying community guidelines to ensure inclusivity. Amplifying Marginalized Voices is about providing platforms for underrepresented members to share their experiences and perspectives. Direct Intervention involves addressing harmful behavior promptly and assertively. Community Empowerment is about equipping community members with tools and knowledge to challenge biases themselves.

Educative Interventions involve creating spaces for dialogue and learning. Community managers can host webinars, share resources, or facilitate discussions around biases and discrimination. This approach is preventative and aims at fostering an inclusive community culture.

Policy Reform is about ensuring that community guidelines and policies explicitly address biases and discriminatory behavior. Community managers may need to revisit and revise policies to ensure they are inclusive and aligned with the principles of transformative justice.

Amplifying Marginalized Voices allows community managers to ensure that diverse perspectives are heard and valued within the community. This could involve spotlighting stories of marginalized members or ensuring diverse representation in community discussions and leadership roles.

Direct Intervention is necessary when harmful behavior occurs. Community managers should address such behavior assertively yet empathetically, ensuring that it is a learning opportunity for the community.

Community Empowerment involves equipping community members to challenge biases and become co-conspirators in the work of disruption. By fostering a culture of allyship and co-conspiratorship, community managers can ensure that the work of disruption is shared and sustained.

Embracing the Cycle

Embracing the cycle of disruption is crucial for community managers aiming to foster inclusive and equitable online spaces. It requires continuous effort, adaptability, and resilience. By understanding that disruption is not a one-off event but an ongoing cycle, community managers can effectively challenge and transform harmful norms and practices within their communities. The cycle of disruption ensures that the work of fostering transformative justice is always evolving, growing, and responding to the needs of the community.

Chapter 5: Language Matters: Changing the Language to Include More and Shame Less



Introduction

The power of language in shaping communities, experiences, and perceptions cannot be overstated. Language plays a crucial role in establishing the culture of an online community and

directly influences how members interact with each other. In this chapter, we delve into the nuances of language in online community management and explore how certain terminologies can inadvertently perpetuate harm, especially to marginalized individuals.

Understanding the Impact of Language

Language is not just a means of communication; it is a tool that shapes reality and builds worlds. When community managers use terms like "users," "positive only talk," and "lurkers," they might unintentionally create environments that are less inclusive and more judgemental. Let's dissect these terms:

1. "Users": The term 'user' objectifies individuals by reducing them to mere consumers of content. It does not acknowledge their identity, voice, or contribution to the community.
2. "Positive Only Talk": While promoting positivity is important, enforcing a "positive only talk" rule can suppress honest expression and may inadvertently silence voices that need to discuss challenging experiences.
3. "Lurkers": This term can carry negative connotations, suggesting that those who prefer to observe rather than actively participate are doing something suspicious or unwelcome.

Creating an Inclusive Lexicon

To foster inclusivity, community managers can adopt language that respects and acknowledges the individuality and experiences of every member. Here are some alternatives:

1. "Users" to "Community Members" or "Participants": This shift emphasizes belonging and agency.
2. "Positive Only Talk" to "Respectful and Constructive Engagement": This allows space for diverse conversations while maintaining respect.
3. "Lurkers" to "Observers" or "Passive Participants": These terms neutrally describe those who prefer to learn by watching and reading without the negative connotations.

The Ripple Effect of Language Change

Altering language isn't just about political correctness; it's about creating spaces where everyone feels seen and valued. By changing the language, community managers can help in dismantling pre-existing biases and power dynamics. For instance, replacing "positive only talk" with encouragement for "respectful dialogue" opens avenues for difficult but necessary conversations around discrimination, mental health, and other sensitive topics.

Addressing Marginalization through Language

Marginalized individuals often bear the brunt of exclusionary language practices. By consciously evolving the language used in community guidelines and conversations, community managers can help rectify systemic disparities. This practice is not about policing language but about fostering a space where everyone feels they can contribute without fear of judgment or dismissal.

Conclusion: Language as a Tool for Transformation

Language, when used thoughtfully, becomes a powerful tool for transformative justice. By shifting away from terms that shame or exclude and moving towards a lexicon that includes and respects, community managers can ensure the continual evolution and health of their online spaces. This chapter underscores the importance of being mindful of the language we use, understanding its impact, and being willing to adapt for the betterment of the community.

1. Acknowledging Personal Biases:

Every individual, regardless of their background or experiences, carries biases. For community managers, this introspective step is crucial. It's about recognizing that our worldview, shaped by our personal experiences, can unconsciously seep into our professional decisions. By admitting our vulnerabilities and blind spots, we not only foster personal growth but also lay the foundation for a more equitable community. It's akin to planting a seed, acknowledging that while it might be small, it has the potential to sprout into a tree of understanding.

Chapter 6: Understanding Power Dynamics

Introduction:



Understanding stakeholders is a pivotal aspect of community management. Stakeholders can be categorized into two primary groups: those within the internal company community and those in the external community. Each group consists of individuals who possess varying degrees of privilege and power based on an assortment of characteristics. These characteristics can be visible or invisible, and they often contribute to either fostering community resiliency or accruing community debt. Community managers find themselves navigating a complex web of stakeholder needs, all while juggling a plethora of roles and responsibilities.

The Gradient of Privilege and Power

Understanding the Gradient:

The gradient of privilege and power within a community is shaped by numerous factors including race, gender, socio-economic status, ability, age, and more. Individuals with over-marginalizing characteristics often find themselves at different levels of this gradient, influencing their access to resources, representation, and decision-making power.

Impacts on Community Resiliency and Debt:

A community that acknowledges and actively works to bridge these disparities cultivates resiliency. Conversely, ignoring these disparities results in what can be termed as "community debt," a cumulative burden that can lead to discord and disengagement.

Internal Company Community

Defining the Stakeholders:

Executives (C-Suite):

Executives, comprising roles such as the CEO, CTO, and COO, are pivotal in steering the company's approach towards justice and community management. Initially, they might exhibit resistance to transformative justice if they are entrenched in traditional punitive or restorative justice models. Their focus is often on the company's bottom line and public image, and the introduction of transformative justice may be perceived as a potential risk or unfamiliar venture.

Product Managers:

Product managers prioritize solutions that enhance user experience and marketability. Their initial buy-in for transformative justice can be gained by demonstrating its potential to cultivate a more engaged and loyal user base. Resistance may arise if they perceive the shift as a diversion from product development timelines.

Engineers and Developers:

Engineers and developers might initially be neutral or resistant to transformative justice, focusing primarily on product development. However, illustrating how an inclusive community can lead to valuable user feedback and better product iterations can gain their support.

Quality Assurance (QA) Professionals:

QA professionals aim to deliver a product free from defects. They might be supportive of transformative justice if it is shown to improve user satisfaction and reduce complaints. Resistance may stem from concerns about increased workload or changes in testing protocols.

Designers:

Designers, especially those in UI/UX, may quickly grasp the benefits of transformative justice as it aligns with creating empathetic and inclusive designs. Initial resistance might be due to concerns about redesigning existing elements or time required for inclusive design practices.

Data Scientists and Analysts:

Data scientists may initially be neutral, evaluating the impact of transformative justice based on data and analytics. Showcasing data-driven evidence of positive impacts on user engagement and retention can facilitate buy-in.

Marketing and Sales Teams:

The marketing and sales teams might be skeptical initially, assessing the impacts of transformative justice on branding and sales. Demonstrating how a commitment to justice can enhance brand image and customer loyalty can foster support.

Customer Support and Success Teams:

These teams may quickly align with transformative justice as it can directly correlate to improved customer relations and satisfaction. Resistance may arise if there are concerns about handling increased queries during the transition.

Human Resources (HR) and Administration:

HR and administration might advocate for transformative justice as it resonates with fostering a positive work environment. Resistance could stem from concerns about the implementation process and potential pushback from other departments.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Trainer:

A DEI trainer is a champion of transformative justice, working to educate and promote inclusive practices within the company. They may find allies in community managers and HR but could face resistance from stakeholders who are wary of changes or see DEI initiatives as secondary to the company's primary goals.

Community Managers:

Community managers might be early adopters of transformative justice, seeing its potential to create harmonious communities. However, they might face resistance internally from stakeholders uncertain about this approach.

Legal and Compliance Teams:

These teams may initially resist transformative justice due to potential legal uncertainties. Outlining a clear compliance and legal framework can facilitate buy-in.

Finance and Accounting Teams:

The finance team might be resistant due to concerns about the cost implications of transformative justice initiatives. Demonstrating the long-term financial gains from a stable and engaged community can sway opinions positively.

In summary, understanding the perspectives and potential resistance points of each stakeholder, including DEI trainers, is essential for community managers to effectively advocate for transformative justice within a tech company.

The Community Managers' Double Bind

Introduction:

The role of a community manager is often likened to that of a bridge, seamlessly connecting internal stakeholders of a company with its external community. This position brings with it a unique set of opportunities and challenges. While community managers have the power to influence and shape the narrative, the nature of their job also places them in a precarious situation known as the 'double bind'. In this context, the double bind refers to the conflicting demands and expectations placed on community managers. On one hand, they are expected to advocate for the needs and voices of the community, while on the other, they must align with the company's goals and policies. Navigating this delicate balance becomes even more complex when promoting transformative justice.

The Double Bind:

Community managers are often caught in a tug of war between the community's demands for transformative justice and the company's existing structures and processes. The double bind emerges from the expectation that they must please both sides, often with limited resources and support. They are expected to foster an inclusive and respectful community while also dealing with resistance from internal stakeholders who may not fully understand or support transformative justice initiatives.

Risks and Rewards:

1. Short-Term Risks and Rewards:

Risk: Pushback from Internal Stakeholders

- Community managers may face resistance from colleagues who are skeptical of transformative justice initiatives.

- Reward: By successfully advocating for transformative justice, community managers can foster a more inclusive environment and gain credibility.

Risk: Community Backlash

- Initial changes may not be well-received by all members of the community.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Reward: Transparency and open communication can lead to community trust and loyalty.

Risk: Burnout

- Community managers are susceptible to burnout due to the sheer volume and variety of tasks they undertake. The constant balancing act between appeasing internal stakeholders and nurturing the external community can lead to exhaustion. The emotional labor involved in community management, such as handling conflicts and maintaining a collaborative environment, further contributes to this burnout.

- Reward: Successfully navigating conflicts and building resilient teams can lead to job satisfaction and professional growth.

Risk: Losing your Job or Being Laid Off

- Being a disrupter can lead to cultural exclusion and loss of employment.
- Reward: Building integrity with values and growing new levels of motivation to change oppressive systems that reactively harm anyone who challenges their discriminatory practices.

2. Long-Term Risks and Rewards:

Risk: Sustaining Engagement

- Over time, maintaining high levels of engagement while pushing for transformative justice can be challenging.
- Reward: Persistent efforts can lead to a robust, engaged, and loyal community.

Risk: Evolving Company Policies

- Company policies may change, potentially conflicting with established community norms.
- Reward: Community managers can be instrumental in ensuring policies are aligned with community values, thereby reinforcing their importance within the organization.

Risk: Career Progression

- Community managers may feel their role is undervalued, affecting career progression.
- Reward: Successfully navigating the double bind can lead to recognition and opportunities for advancement.

Conclusion:

The community manager's role is fraught with complexities and contradictions, encapsulated in the double bind. They must consistently navigate between advocating for the community and aligning with the company's objectives. Despite the challenges, community managers are in a unique position to drive transformative justice and create lasting positive impacts. By understanding and strategically navigating the risks and rewards, they can contribute to fostering inclusive, resilient, and thriving communities.

Fear of AI Replacement:

Alongside burnout, there is a looming fear among community managers about being replaced by AI and automation. The advancement in technologies has led to the automation of certain aspects of community management, creating an undercurrent of job insecurity. This fear acts as another layer to the double bind, where community managers feel the pressure to continuously prove their indispensability.

Navigating the Fear of AI Replacement

The rapid progression of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought forth unprecedented changes across industries, revolutionizing how tasks are approached and executed. Within the realm of community management, AI has shown potential to automate and optimize various processes. However, this progression is accompanied by a palpable fear among community managers that AI might eventually replace their roles. This fear often influences their decisions, especially when it comes to introducing transformative justice, which could be perceived as complicating the user experience, slowing down processes, and hindering scalability and retention.

Understanding the Fear:

The fear of AI replacement among community managers stems from the increasing reliance on automated tools to perform tasks such as moderating content, managing user engagement, and even resolving conflicts. These tasks, once the exclusive domain of human managers, are now being handled efficiently by algorithms. The apprehension lies not just in the loss of job security, but also in the belief that introducing elements that may complicate the workflow could expedite their replacement.

The Paradox of Simplification and Complication:

Community managers often find themselves caught in a paradox. On one side, there's a push for efficiency and scalability through AI, and on the other, there's a need to address complex issues like transformative justice, which may initially seem to slow down processes. The fear is that by advocating for the latter, community managers may inadvertently make their roles seem dispensable or outdated.

Impact on Transformative Justice:

The fear of AI replacement can lead community managers to shy away from initiatives that might be perceived as complicating or slowing down user interactions. This can include hesitancy to introduce transformative justice practices, which might involve nuanced discussions, personalized conflict resolution, and ongoing community engagement. These elements, while crucial for a healthy community, may be seen as hindrances to streamlined, AI-driven processes.

Navigating the Fear:

1. **Demonstrating Unique Value:** Community managers can navigate this fear by demonstrating the unique value they bring, such as emotional intelligence, cultural understanding, and the ability to drive meaningful conversations - elements that AI is yet to replicate effectively.

2. Advocacy for Human-Centric Approaches: While AI can handle quantitative data efficiently, community managers can emphasize their role in qualitative insights, advocating for a balance between automation and human touch.

3. Continuous Learning and Adaptation: Community managers can future-proof their roles by continuously learning and adapting to new technologies, thereby showing that they can work alongside AI to enhance processes rather than being replaced by them.

4. Showcasing Long-Term Benefits: By effectively communicating how transformative justice practices can lead to more engaged and loyal communities in the long run, community managers can align these initiatives with the company's goals of retention and growth.

Conclusion:

The fear of AI replacement is a real concern among community managers, influencing their willingness to introduce practices that may seem to complicate processes. However, by strategically positioning themselves as irreplaceable custodians of community values and by aligning transformative justice with long-term community health, community managers can navigate this fear and continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the digital landscape.

External Community

Introduction:

The external community of a tech company is a vibrant, diverse ecosystem of stakeholders, each contributing to the overall landscape in unique ways. From enthusiasts to critics, the community forms a dynamic tapestry of voices and perspectives. In understanding how each stakeholder might respond to transformative justice initiatives, it is crucial to delve into their distinct roles and expectations.

Part 1: Defining the Stakeholders

1. Members:

- Definition: Members are individuals who actively engage with the tech company's products or services. They are integral to the community, providing feedback and contributing to the product's growth.
- Response to Transformative Justice: Members may appreciate initiatives that improve user experience, inclusivity, and accessibility.

2. Developers and Contributors:

- Definition: These are professionals or enthusiasts who contribute to the development of a product, especially in open-source communities.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Response: They might support justice initiatives that foster collaborative, inclusive, and respectful development environments.

3. Fans and Brand Advocates:

- Definition: These stakeholders passionately support and promote the company's products, often sharing updates and news.

- Response: They may respond positively to transformative justice initiatives, viewing them as additional reasons to support the brand.

4. Critics and Skeptics:

- Definition: Critics provide constructive or negative feedback about the company's products or actions.

- Response: They may scrutinize transformative justice initiatives for authenticity and impact.

5. Partners and Affiliates:

- Definition: These are organizations or individuals that have formal associations with the tech company for mutual benefit.

- Response: Partners may align with transformative justice initiatives if they align with their values and business goals.

6. Influencers and Bloggers:

- Definition: These stakeholders have significant online followings and can influence public opinion about the company.

- Response: Their response may vary, with some endorsing transformative justice initiatives and others remaining neutral.

7. Potential Customers:

- Definition: Individuals who are considering the company's products but have not yet engaged.

- Response: Transformative justice initiatives may sway their decision positively if they prioritize ethical considerations.

8. Competitors:

- Definition: Other tech companies or entities offering similar products or services.

- Response: Competitors may observe and possibly emulate successful transformative justice initiatives.

9. Regulatory Bodies and Watchdogs:

- Definition: Organizations that ensure the company complies with laws and ethical standards.

- Response: They may view transformative justice initiatives as a positive step towards ethical compliance.

10. Casual Observers:

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Definition: Individuals who are aware of the company but have no strong engagement or opinions.
- Response: Transformative justice initiatives may or may not significantly impact their perception of the company.

Part 2: Understanding Stakeholder Responses to Transformative Justice Initiatives

Varied Perspectives:

Understanding that each stakeholder comes with a unique perspective is crucial. While some may actively champion transformative justice initiatives, others might remain indifferent or critical.

Balancing Act:

A tech company must navigate these responses, ensuring that their transformative justice initiatives are genuine, well-communicated, and impactful.

Part 3: Engaging Stakeholders in Transformative Justice Initiatives

Inclusive Communication:

Clear, transparent, and inclusive communication can ensure that stakeholders feel considered and respected in transformative justice initiatives.

Feedback Loops:

Establishing mechanisms for feedback allows stakeholders to voice their opinions, contributing to a more inclusive and well-rounded initiative.

Conclusion:

Understanding and navigating the external community is a nuanced task that requires empathy, strategic thinking, and a commitment to transformative justice. By recognizing the diverse range of stakeholders and anticipating their responses, tech companies can create initiatives that resonate, foster positive engagement, and contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on justice and equity within the tech industry.

Understanding, Fostering and Responding to Diversity of input and needs:

The external community includes users, customers, fans, critics, and more. Here too, there is a gradient of privilege and power, influenced by diverse factors.

Chapter: Understanding, Fostering, and Responding to Diversity of Input and Needs as Part of Transformative Justice

Introduction:

In the realm of community management, diversity is not just a buzzword; it's a catalyst for transformative justice. Ensuring diverse inputs and catering to a variety of needs can propel a community from being merely functional to flourishing. This chapter explores how understanding, fostering, and responding to diverse inputs and needs is integral to practicing transformative justice within online communities.

Section 1: Understanding Diversity of Input and Needs

Defining Diversity:

Diversity in a community context refers to a wide array of perspectives, experiences, and needs that arise from members' varied backgrounds, identities, and socio-economic statuses. These differences can be along the lines of race, gender, age, ability, religion, and more.

The Importance of Diverse Inputs:

A community that embraces diversity is one that is rich in ideas and innovation. Diverse inputs lead to a well-rounded community that is capable of introspection, self-correction, and growth.

Section 2: Fostering Diversity as a Path to Transformative Justice

Transformative Justice Explained:

Transformative justice seeks to address the root causes of harm and inequity by fostering systemic change. It goes beyond punitive and restorative approaches, aiming to create environments that preemptively mitigate harm.

Creating Spaces for Diversity:

Fostering diversity is crucial for transformative justice. By actively seeking and encouraging diverse voices, community managers can ensure that the community is not just reactive but proactive in addressing disparities.

Inclusivity and Accessibility:

Ensuring that platforms are accessible to people with disabilities and are inclusive of marginalized voices is a step towards transformative justice. It's about making sure that everyone has a seat at the table.

Section 3: Responding to Diverse Needs

Proactive Listening:

Community managers must practice proactive listening to understand and respond to the diverse needs of their community. This means actively seeking feedback and being attuned to subtle signals of discomfort or exclusion.

Customized Engagement Strategies:

Not all community members interact in the same way. Tailoring engagement strategies to cater to different needs and preferences is vital. This could range from creating different communication channels to customizing content formats.

Section 4: Diversity and Transformative Justice in Action

Case Studies:

Examples from successful online communities can provide a roadmap for how diversity and transformative justice can be seamlessly integrated. These case studies demonstrate the tangible benefits of fostering a culture that values diverse inputs.

Challenges and Solutions:

While diversity is enriching, it is not without challenges. Conflicts may arise, and needs may sometimes clash. Addressing these issues in a manner that is aligned with transformative justice involves mediation, education, and sometimes, policy changes.

Section 5: The Long-Term Impact

Building Sustainable Communities:

Communities that embrace diversity and transformative justice are more likely to be sustainable in the long run. They foster a sense of belonging and ensure that members feel valued and heard.

Continuous Evolution:

The work of fostering diversity and practicing transformative justice is never done. Communities evolve, and so do their needs and challenges. Continuous commitment to these principles ensures that the community remains vibrant and resilient.

Conclusion:

Understanding, fostering, and responding to the diversity of input and needs is not just a best practice for community management; it's a transformative and justice-oriented approach that ensures the longevity and health of a community. By embedding these principles in their strategies, community managers can create spaces that are not only inclusive and diverse but also equitable and just.

Multiple Hats-one person:

Chapter: Navigating Varied Roles: A Transformative Justice Approach

Introduction:

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

The role of a community manager is multifaceted and dynamic, often encompassing a spectrum of responsibilities such as moderating discussions, mediating conflicts, marketing the brand, and resolving complaints. Navigating these varied roles with a transformative justice lens enables community managers to foster environments that are not only inclusive but also actively work towards dismantling oppressive structures and building community resilience.

The Multifaceted Role of a Community Manager

Understanding the Roles:

Community managers wear many hats. They are moderators ensuring conversations remain respectful, mediators resolving conflicts, marketers promoting the brand, and complaint resolution specialists addressing grievances. Each role necessitates a nuanced approach that considers the needs, privileges, and positions of the stakeholders involved.

The Transformative Justice Lens:

A transformative justice approach goes beyond resolving individual instances of harm or conflict. It seeks to understand and address the underlying systemic issues and power imbalances that contribute to these instances in the first place.

The Moderator - Facilitating Respectful Dialogue

Ensuring Respectful Conversations:

As moderators, community managers ensure that conversations within the community adhere to guidelines that foster respect and inclusivity. They monitor discussions and take action against hate speech, harassment, and other harmful behaviors.

Transformative Justice in Moderation:

Applying a transformative justice lens, moderators can go beyond merely enforcing rules. They can create spaces for community-led discussions on norms, encourage proactive bystander interventions, and foster a culture of mutual respect and learning.

The Mediator - Resolving Conflicts

Conflict Resolution:

Community managers step into the role of mediators when conflicts arise. They help in de-escalating situations and finding common ground among disputing parties.

Transformative Justice in Mediation:

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

A transformative justice approach to mediation involves acknowledging the power dynamics at play and ensuring that marginalized voices are heard. It emphasizes restorative dialogues and community healing, focusing on addressing the root causes of conflicts.

The Marketer - Promoting the Brand

Marketing Responsibilities:

Community managers are also responsible for marketing the brand, products, or services, ensuring that the community is engaged and growing.

Transformative Justice in Marketing:

A transformative justice lens in marketing means advocating for ethical practices, ensuring representation in promotional materials, and being transparent and accountable to the community. It involves marketing strategies that respect and uplift rather than exploit.

The Complaint Resolution Specialist - Addressing Grievances

Handling Complaints:

Community managers address grievances and complaints from community members, ensuring that their concerns are acknowledged and resolved.

Transformative Justice in Complaint Resolution:

Addressing complaints with a transformative justice approach means not only resolving the immediate issue but also understanding and addressing any systemic problems that may have led to the complaint. It involves listening empathetically and working towards comprehensive solutions.

Nuance and Empathy

Balancing Act:

Navigating these varied roles requires community managers to be adept at switching between different responsibilities while maintaining a consistent approach grounded in transformative justice principles.

Understanding Stakeholders:

Each role demands a nuanced understanding of stakeholders' needs, privileges, and positions. By recognizing these nuances, community managers can more effectively foster environments that are inclusive and equitable.

Conclusion:

Navigating varied roles as a community manager is a complex yet rewarding endeavor. By applying a transformative justice lens across these roles, community managers can contribute to building communities that are not only respectful and engaging but also actively work towards dismantling oppressive systems and fostering resilience and equity.

Tension and Multiplicity

Community managers stand at the crossroads of various stakeholder needs, often finding themselves in roles that require them to mediate, negotiate, and communicate effectively. Taking on such a multitude of responsibilities might feel akin to being a judge, prosecutor, defender, and jury all at once. When approached through a transformative justice lens, these roles take on even deeper significance. Transformative justice seeks not only to address individual instances of harm but to transform the underlying conditions that allow harm to occur. Let's explore how community managers can navigate these challenges while fostering a community that embodies the principles of transformative justice.

The Community Manager as Judge, Prosecutor, Defender, and Jury

Balancing the "Sky and Earth":

The term "sky and earth" symbolizes the vast gap between higher company objectives (sky) and the grounded realities of the community members (earth). As mediators, community managers must bridge this gap, ensuring that company directives don't overshadow the lived experiences and needs of the community.

Amplifying Marginalized Voices:

Community managers, when acting with a transformative justice lens, prioritize the amplification of marginalized voices. They ensure that these voices not only get a platform but also influence decisions and policies.

Maintaining Objectivity:

Like a judge or jury, community managers must remain objective, especially during misunderstandings and disagreements. This requires a deep understanding of transformative justice, which focuses on creating conditions where harm is less likely to occur rather than merely punishing transgressions.

The Transformative Justice Toolkit for Community Managers

Active Listening:

Active listening involves fully concentrating, understanding, and responding to what is being said. It's foundational for community managers aiming to foster transformative justice, as it ensures that community members feel truly heard.

Restorative Circles:

Adapting from restorative justice practices, restorative circles can be employed in online communities. They provide a space for open dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect, aiming to repair harm and rebuild trust.

Preventative Measures:

Transformative justice also focuses on preventing harm. Community managers can proactively set community guidelines, educate members about these principles, and create an environment where harm is less likely to occur.

Conclusion:

Navigating the multiplicity of roles as a community manager is undoubtedly challenging. However, when approached with a transformative justice lens, it offers an opportunity to create a community that is not just harmonious but actively works towards addressing and transforming the root causes of harm. It's a journey of continuous learning, deep empathy, and a commitment to creating spaces where everyone feels valued and heard.

Negotiating Multiple Roles: A Transformative Justice Approach

A community manager often plays several roles simultaneously. From content creation to conflict resolution, each role requires understanding and empathizing with stakeholders while keeping an eye on the community's pulse.

Content Creation:

When it comes to content creation, a transformative justice lens means ensuring that content is inclusive, represents diverse voices, and doesn't perpetuate harmful stereotypes. It's about creating content that educates, uplifts, and fosters a sense of belonging.

Resiliency Building:

Transformative justice emphasizes healing and restoration over punishment. In building resiliency, community managers should aim to understand the root causes, facilitate communication between parties, and work towards solutions that address underlying issues rather than just the symptoms.

Stakeholder Empathy:

Each stakeholder, be it an internal team member or an external community participant, comes with their own set of experiences and perspectives. Empathy is key to understanding these nuances, and through a transformative justice lens, it becomes pivotal in ensuring that everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

Introduction:

In the dynamic world of online communities, a community manager is like a Swiss Army knife, adapting and transforming to meet the needs of the moment. From crafting engaging content to fostering conflict resiliency, their responsibilities are multifaceted. In this chapter, we explore how community managers can negotiate these multiple roles through the lens of transformative justice, aiming not just to manage but to proactively cultivate communities that are inclusive, equitable, and resilient.

Understanding the Multiplicity of Roles

Defining the Roles:

Community managers wear many hats. They are content creators, brand ambassadors, conflict resilience architects, event planners, customer service representatives, data analysts, and more. Each role presents its own challenges and opportunities.

The Need for a Transformative Lens:

Given the variety of tasks, community managers must approach their work with a transformative justice mindset. This means actively seeking to address the root causes of conflicts and inequalities within the community and working towards lasting change.

Content Creation with a Transformative Lens

Inclusive Content:

When crafting content, community managers must ensure that it resonates with diverse audience members. This involves being mindful of language, visuals, and narratives, ensuring they are inclusive and respectful.

Addressing Systemic Issues:

Content creation can also be a platform to address systemic issues within the community and the broader society. By doing so, community managers can contribute to transformative justice by sparking conversations and awareness.

Conflict Resiliency and Transformative Justice

Beyond Surface Solutions:

Fostering conflict resiliency is not just about addressing the immediate issue but understanding and tackling underlying systemic problems. A transformative justice approach to conflict resiliency involves creating spaces for open dialogue, accountability, and healing.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

Empathy and Restorative Practices:

Community managers can incorporate restorative practices that go beyond punitive measures, emphasizing empathy, understanding, and collaborative solutions that build resilience.

Event Planning and Fostering Inclusion

Inclusive Events:

When planning events, community managers must ensure accessibility and inclusivity. This can involve thoughtful considerations regarding time zones, languages, cultural sensitivities, and accessibility features.

Community Building:

Events can be leveraged to build a sense of community and belonging, which aligns with transformative justice principles by fostering environments that celebrate diversity and encourage active participation.

Customer Service and Advocacy

Advocacy for Marginalized Voices:

In their role as customer service representatives, community managers must advocate for marginalized voices and work towards ensuring their concerns are addressed at structural levels.

Proactive Engagement:

Engaging with community members proactively can help in identifying potential issues before they escalate, aligning with the transformative justice approach of addressing root causes.

Building a Resilient Community with a Transformative Justice Lens

In the realm of community management, a transformative justice approach is imperative to foster spaces that are not only inclusive but also resilient and adaptive. Transformative justice is an approach that seeks to address the root causes of conflict and harm by promoting accountability and mutual understanding. Rather than focusing solely on punitive or restorative measures, it aims to transform relationships and systems to prevent recurrence of harm, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. In building a community, this approach acknowledges the realities of power imbalances, systemic biases, and historical injustices, aiming to create a space where every voice is valued and heard. This chapter delves into how community managers can build resilient communities by employing a transformative justice lens, emphasizing the importance of conflict in community health, the role of community managers in

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

educating internal stakeholders, buffering under-recognized voices, and iterating with community engagement on values and guidelines.

The Role of Conflict in Community Health

Understanding Conflict as a Catalyst:

Conflict, often perceived negatively, can be transformative when approached with a justice-oriented mindset. It uncovers underlying issues, brings diverse voices to the forefront, and can lead to the establishment of more equitable structures and practices.

Community Health through Transformative Justice:

Transformative justice seeks to address the root causes of conflict and injustice, aiming for systemic change. It reframes conflict as an opportunity for collective introspection, accountability, and reparation.

Educating Internal Stakeholders

The Importance of Internal Advocacy:

Community managers act as liaisons between external communities and internal stakeholders. They must educate internal teams about the nuances of community sentiment, challenges faced by marginalized groups, and the importance of inclusivity.

Inculcating a Transformative Justice Mindset:

By sensitizing internal stakeholders to the principles of transformative justice, community managers can foster an organizational culture that values empathy, accountability, and equitable resolution.

Buffering and Uplifting Under-Recognized Voices

Acknowledging and Amplifying Voices:

Community managers need to ensure that voices from marginalized or under-recognized groups are acknowledged and amplified. This involves actively seeking out these voices and creating spaces where they can be heard.

Buffering Against Harm:

Community managers must also act as buffers, protecting under-recognized voices from potential harm and ensuring that the community space is safe and respectful for all.

Iterating on Community Engagement

Evolving Values and Guidelines:

A resilient community is one that can adapt and evolve. Community managers should continually engage with the community to iterate on values and guidelines, ensuring they remain relevant and inclusive.

Co-Creation with the Community:

Transformative justice encourages active participation from the community in shaping its norms. Community managers can facilitate processes where community members co-create guidelines, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

The Community Manager as a Facilitator of Transformative Justice

Facilitating Dialogue and Resolution:

Community managers can employ transformative justice principles by facilitating dialogues that aim for understanding and resolution, rather than mere conflict management.

Continuous Learning and Adaptation:

The journey towards building a resilient community is ongoing. Community managers must continuously learn, adapt, and implement strategies that align with transformative justice principles.

Conclusion:

Building a resilient community through a transformative justice lens is a dynamic and complex endeavor. It requires acknowledging the transformative potential of conflict, educating internal stakeholders, uplifting marginalized voices, and continually engaging with the community to iterate on values and guidelines. Community managers, in this context, emerge as facilitators of transformative justice, steering the community towards resilience, equity, and holistic growth.

Community Debt: Extraction instead of Reciprocity¹

The narrative of *The Giving Tree* offers an allegory that mirrors the dynamics observed in the interaction between businesses and their communities. The story outlines the journey of a young boy who persistently takes from a benevolent apple tree until nothing remains. This can be seen as a metaphor for the scenario where a business perceives its audience as a community, subsequently depleting its resources and vitality.

Understanding the Dynamics

¹ Summarized from original blog: <https://vortexr.org/what-is-community-debt/>

The term "community" often evokes positive connotations and is frequently used to describe a group engaging with a business around a product. However, there's a nuanced difference between audience, consumers, and community. Many such relationships may be unidirectional, similar to the tale of the apple tree, where a company lauds the giving nature of the community without evaluating the balance of the relationship.

The Missteps in Terminology

Often, terms like "super-users" and "creators" are used interchangeably without understanding the distinct values and needs of audiences, consumers, and communities. Labels such as "toxic community" shift the responsibility for change onto the individuals, rather than addressing the broader system contributing to the issue.

In gaming communities, individuals engaging in harmful behaviors are labeled as "problem-users" or "trolls," and the approach is often to remove these individuals to preserve the community. At VortexR, we've identified the concept of "community debt" as a precursor to a toxic community environment.

Visualizing Community Debt

Community debt is a cycle of depletion and resentment that emerges when individuals or groups within a community do not feel acknowledged or satisfied. It can arise from unclear boundaries and values, or when members support the product but aren't invested in as individuals needing development. Community debt may also reflect the company's internal struggles, manifesting through programming blindspots and high turnover.

Recognizing the Signs

Indicators of community debt include:

- A lack of real-time, bidirectional communication between the Community Team or Developers and the community.
- Community members providing more value than they receive without regular contact with the team.
- Members bonding over product-related issues and growing leaders who become advocates.

As these behaviors persist, relationships within the community polarize, leading to conflicts that may not be directly related to the product. The Community Team may become reactive to the community's needs, and feedback may frame the developers as either villains or gods. This results in a toxic community and an increase in churn, with members expressing frustration before eventually departing.

Conclusion

Transformative justice principles invite recognizing and addressing community debt and underscore the need for businesses to foster genuine, reciprocal relationships with their communities to ensure sustained growth and harmony.

Mitigating and Addressing Community Debt:

Proactively addressing disparities and potential points of contention can help in reducing community debt, ensuring a healthier and more harmonious community.

Open the Channels of Communication

Active listening involves more than just hearing. It's about fostering a genuine two-way dialogue. Regularly schedule community sessions or "office hours" to ensure members feel valued, recognized, and engaged. Consistency in these interactions will pave the way for trust and deeper connections within the community.

Commit to Your Promises

Acknowledging feedback without actionable outcomes can lead to heightened frustration among community members. Always highlight the primary concerns raised by the community in subsequent updates. For instance, addressing issues like, "We've noted your concerns about in-game glitches, and are prioritizing solutions."

Anticipate and Prepare for Change

Keeping your community in the dark until the last minute can spark irritation. Preemptive communication about forthcoming changes can mitigate negative reactions. To counteract the bias of looking back fondly at previous versions, allow members to juxtapose older versions with the updated ones. This comparative approach can help in recognizing genuine progress while facilitating constructive feedback.

Foster Transparency in Decision-making

Despite valuing community feedback, there will be times when product decisions might not align with their preferences. In such cases, it's crucial to articulate the rationale behind these decisions compassionately, ensuring the community management team is involved in the process.

Collaborative Building

Envision your community's growth as a joint endeavor. Incorporate cycles of collaboration where developers, the community team, and members coalesce around shared values, aspirations, and product enhancements. Regular events or meet-ups can serve as platforms for these interactions. Additionally, earmark spaces for members to share creative contributions, from designs to multimedia content.

Empower a Multifaceted Leadership

In cultivating your community, identify and nurture a diverse set of leaders. Implement programs that incentivize members to hone their skills and ascend leadership roles. While monetary

rewards are appreciated, it's also worth inquiring what non-financial incentives might resonate with the community. It's essential to distinguish between moderators, who maintain harmony, and community leaders, who might sometimes prioritize voicing concerns.

Strengthen Conflict Management

Focus on building a community that's resilient to conflicts, rather than merely resolving them. Promptly address disputes and provide resources for conflict resilience training. Ensure there are clear avenues for members to report and resolve grievances. For a comprehensive guide on curating inclusive spaces, consider reading Chauntelle Lewis's "8 Steps to Intentionally Cultivate a Safe Space of Belonging." Remember, conflicts, when approached constructively, can be catalysts for growth. As eloquently put by Michelle MiJung Kim, "Our drive to be perceived as good is often influenced by a binary perception: if not good, then surely bad." Stay tuned for our subsequent blog delving deeper into conflict resilience and community moderation.

Conclusion:

A successful community manager iteratively navigates the nuanced landscape of internal and external stakeholders, understanding the complexities of privilege and power. By doing so, they can foster a resilient community and mitigate community debt, all while adeptly managing the myriad roles they inhabit. It's a challenging yet rewarding balancing act that requires continuous learning, empathy, and strategic thinking.

Chapter 7. Creating Impactful Changes:



Here is a visual representation for the chapter titled 'Creating Impactful Changes'. The image illustrates the five crucial steps in creating impactful changes in online community management:

Through our continuous efforts, we begin to see tangible changes in our communities. These changes, whether big or small, are testaments to our dedication. As community managers, we celebrate these victories, recognizing that each one contributes to the larger goal of an inclusive and supportive community.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

1. **Setting Clear Objectives:** Signified by a target, this section emphasizes the importance of having well-defined goals and objectives for the community. Setting clear goals helps to focus efforts and measure progress.
2. **Engaging Stakeholders:** The handshake icon represents the collaboration and engagement of all stakeholders in the community. Engaging stakeholders ensures that all voices are heard and that the community's needs are met.
3. **Implementing Sustainable Solutions:** The tree symbolizes the growth and sustainability of the changes implemented. Sustainable solutions have long-term benefits and ensure the community's health and prosperity.
4. **Monitoring and Feedback:** Represented by a magnifying glass over a chart, this section highlights the importance of tracking progress and gathering feedback. Monitoring ensures that the changes are effective, and feedback provides insights for continuous improvement.
5. **Celebrating Milestones and Successes:** The trophy icon symbolizes the celebration of achievements, big or small. Recognizing and celebrating milestones boosts morale and motivates members to continue their efforts.

The interconnected design of the visual emphasizes that each step is related and integral to the overall process of creating impactful changes.

Introduction: Creating Impactful Changes

In the realm of online community management, creating impactful changes is the culmination of personal growth, understanding biases, and practicing effective allyship. It's about leveraging one's position, influence, and resources to institute meaningful, long-lasting adjustments that promote inclusivity, respect, and equity. But how do we translate intent into action? And how can community managers ensure that their efforts are both sustainable and genuinely beneficial?

1. Setting Clear Objectives:

- **Understanding the Why:** Before embarking on any change, it's crucial to understand the underlying reasons. Are the changes being made in response to a specific incident? Or are they part of a broader strategy to improve community inclusivity? Having a clear "why" helps direct efforts effectively and provides a rationale that can be communicated to others.
- **Defining Success:** Creating change without a clear vision of what success looks like can lead to aimless efforts. Whether it's increasing representation in community leadership roles,

reducing instances of harmful behavior, or enhancing platform accessibility, having clear, measurable objectives is key.

- Periodic Review: Objectives shouldn't be static. As the community evolves, so too should the goals. Regularly revisiting and refining objectives ensures that efforts remain aligned with the community's needs.

2. Engaging Stakeholders:

- Identifying Key Players: Every community consists of a diverse array of stakeholders, from regular members and moderators to external partners and platform developers. Recognizing and engaging these key players is essential for enacting change.

- Building Bridges: Effective change often requires collaboration. By fostering relationships with stakeholders, community managers can pool resources, share insights, and co-create solutions.

- Continuous Dialogue: Open channels of communication ensure that stakeholders remain informed, their feedback is sought, and any concerns they have are addressed promptly. This ongoing dialogue fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the change process.

3. Implementing Sustainable Solutions:

- Root Cause Analysis: Addressing symptoms without understanding the root cause can lead to temporary fixes. Delving deep to understand the underlying issues ensures that solutions are holistic and address the core of the problem.

- Iterative Approach: Change doesn't always occur linearly. Adopting an iterative approach, where solutions are tested, refined, and re-tested, allows for adaptability and continuous improvement.

- Long-term Vision: While quick wins can be motivating, it's essential to have a long-term vision. This involves considering the scalability of solutions, their sustainability, and how they fit into the broader community ecosystem.

4. Monitoring and Feedback:

- Data-driven Decisions: Utilizing analytics and data can provide insights into the effectiveness of changes. Whether it's tracking engagement metrics, survey results, or incident reports, data can highlight areas of success and those needing further attention.

- Feedback Loops: Encouraging community members to provide feedback ensures that their voices are heard and that the changes made resonate with their needs and experiences.

- Adaptive Strategy: Being receptive to feedback and willing to adapt is crucial. If certain initiatives aren't yielding the desired results, it's essential to reassess and pivot as necessary.

5. Celebrating Milestones and Successes:

- Acknowledging Progress: Every step towards a more inclusive and equitable community should be celebrated. Recognizing milestones, no matter how small, boosts morale and reinforces the importance of the change journey.

- Sharing Success Stories: Highlighting success stories can serve as motivation for the community. It shows that change is possible and that collective efforts yield results.

- Continual Growth: Celebrations shouldn't mark the end of the journey but rather milestones in an ongoing process. There's always room for growth, and each success lays the foundation for further impactful changes.

In conclusion, creating impactful changes in online communities is a multifaceted endeavor. It requires clear objectives, stakeholder engagement, sustainable solutions, continuous monitoring, and a celebration of successes. By adopting a comprehensive and adaptive approach, community managers can foster environments that are not only safe and welcoming but also vibrant and thriving.

Chapter 8. Sustaining the Momentum:



The journey towards inclusivity is long and requires sustained effort. It's essential to keep the momentum going, even when faced with setbacks. By connecting with fellow community managers, attending regular training, and seeking feedback, we ensure that our commitment remains fresh and unwavering.

Introduction: Sustaining the Momentum

In the world of online community management, initiating a positive change is a commendable feat, but ensuring that this change continues to grow and evolve is equally critical. This chapter delves into the various strategies that community managers can employ to sustain the momentum of change.

1. Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Continuous learning is pivotal in ensuring that community managers stay ahead of the curve. In an era where online dynamics shift rapidly, staying informed about new social trends, tools, and technologies can be the difference between a thriving and a stagnant community. Community managers should prioritize their own education, regularly seeking out fresh resources, attending workshops, and participating in discussions that can enhance their skillset.

Adaptation is the natural progression from learning. Once a new piece of information or a new trend is identified, community managers need to assess its relevance and potential impact on their community. Implementing these learnings and being willing to pivot strategies according to the evolving landscape ensures that the community remains relevant and engaging.

Continuous learning and adaptation are not only about reacting to changes but also about anticipating them. Community managers, by staying attuned to the pulse of their community and the broader digital ecosystem, can preemptively address issues and capitalize on opportunities.

2. Consistent Communication and Engagement

Consistent communication is the bedrock of sustaining momentum in online communities. By regularly engaging with members through discussions, updates, and feedback sessions, community managers can foster a sense of belonging and investment among members. Transparency in communication also builds trust, ensuring that members feel valued and heard.

Engagement goes hand-in-hand with communication. Hosting regular events, challenges, or discussions can keep the community vibrant. It's important that these engagements are not just top-down; encouraging user-generated content and peer-to-peer interactions can lead to a more dynamic and self-sustaining community.

Striking the right balance in communication frequency is crucial. Over-communication can lead to fatigue, while under-communication can lead to disinterest. Community managers must find this equilibrium to ensure sustained engagement.

3. Nurturing Allyship and Accomplish-ship

Nurturing allyship within the community means encouraging members to stand up for each other and for the values the community holds. This can be done by recognizing and appreciating acts of allyship and by creating spaces for these conversations to happen organically.

Accomplish-ship is the state of being an accomplice in the pursuit of positive change. Sometimes, allies may need to retreat into a state of accomplish-ship, where they recover and covertly organize. This is a space of self-care and renewal, where burned-out allies rejuvenate themselves before re-engaging in active allyship.

By acknowledging both visible and covert efforts in allyship and accomplish-ship, community managers ensure that members feel seen and valued regardless of how vocal or visible their efforts are. This nuanced approach nurtures a sense of collective responsibility and unity.

4. Leveraging Data and Feedback

Utilizing data analytics and member feedback is crucial in sustaining momentum. Regularly assessing metrics and gathering insights about member engagement, content performance, and community sentiment can guide the community manager in making informed decisions.

Feedback from community members provides a qualitative layer to the quantitative data. Engaging in regular feedback sessions and being open to constructive criticism ensures that the community evolves in tandem with its members' needs.

By marrying data with user feedback, community managers can fine-tune their strategies and make iterative improvements, ensuring that the community stays vibrant and continues to grow.

5. Celebrating Achievements and Reflecting on Challenges

Acknowledging and celebrating achievements, big or small, fosters a positive community culture. Regularly highlighting community milestones, member contributions, and successful initiatives can create a sense of pride and accomplishment among members.

Reflecting on challenges is equally important. By openly addressing setbacks and discussing ways to overcome them, community managers create a culture of resilience and continuous improvement.

Together, celebrating achievements and reflecting on challenges ensure that the community continues to progress while learning from its journey. This dual approach fosters a dynamic and resilient community, ready to adapt and thrive amidst change.

Conclusion

Sustaining momentum in online community management requires a multifaceted approach that combines continuous learning, engagement, allyship, data-driven decision-making, and reflective celebration. By being proactive and adaptive, community managers can ensure that their communities don't just survive but thrive and evolve.

Chapter 9. Building Supportive Communities:



Communities thrive on mutual support. By fostering spaces where members feel heard, understood, and valued, we cultivate an environment of trust. These supportive communities become bastions of hope, showcasing the transformative power of collective effort.

Chapter 9: Building Supportive Communities

Introduction:

Creating a supportive community is an art and a science. It combines understanding human emotions, cultural nuances, and behavioral patterns with strategic planning, consistent engagement, and agile adaptability. A supportive community doesn't just survive; it thrives,

fostering a sense of belonging among members and becoming a safe space for dialogue and growth. This chapter delves into the intricacies of building such communities and ensuring they stand the test of time.

1. Establishing Inclusive Norms:

Establishing inclusive norms is the foundation for building supportive communities. Norms set the tone for interaction, dictate acceptable behavior, and cultivate a sense of respect among members. It's imperative to have community guidelines that are clear, fair, and applicable to everyone. These guidelines should be crafted with inclusivity at the forefront, ensuring that diverse voices are not just heard but are integral to the community's fabric.

Inclusive norms are not just about rules but also about the ambiance and culture of the community. It's about creating an environment where every member feels valued and respected. For example, using gender-neutral language, celebrating cultural diversity, and creating spaces for underrepresented voices can all contribute to establishing inclusive norms.

In practice, community managers can proactively seek input from members to co-create these norms. This democratic approach ensures that the norms are not top-down but are reflective of the collective ethos of the community. Regularly revisiting and updating these norms ensures that they evolve with the community's needs.

2. Prioritizing Mental Health and Well-being:

A supportive community places a high premium on the mental health and well-being of its members. Online spaces can be both a solace and a source of stress. Hence, community managers must actively work towards making their platforms a space of comfort and support. This can include creating mental health awareness campaigns, sharing resources, and facilitating conversations around well-being.

Community managers can also foster a culture of empathy and understanding. For instance, having periodic check-ins, creating spaces for members to share their experiences, and ensuring that conversations are respectful and mindful of potential triggers are essential steps. Mental health professionals can be invited to host sessions or Q&A forums to destigmatize mental health discussions.

It's also crucial to have mechanisms in place to address instances where a member might be facing a crisis. This could include having clear guidelines on how to seek help, partnering with mental health organizations, or having trained professionals as part of the community management team.

3. Encouraging Skill and Knowledge Sharing:

Supportive communities thrive when there is a free exchange of knowledge and skills among members. This sharing culture not only empowers individuals but also strengthens the community's collective competency. Community managers can facilitate this by creating opportunities for members to teach, learn, and grow together.

This could take the form of workshops, webinars, peer mentoring sessions, or even casual "knowledge exchange

" meetups. For instance, a member with expertise in digital marketing could lead a session on effective social media strategies, while another member could share insights on graphic design. This peer-led approach can foster a sense of ownership and pride among members.

Community managers need to ensure that these sessions are accessible and inclusive. This means considering factors such as time zones, language, and accessibility needs when planning these events. By acknowledging and addressing these barriers, community managers can ensure that knowledge sharing is a community-wide endeavor.

Moreover, recognizing and celebrating the contributions of members who share their skills can further reinforce this culture. Regularly spotlighting members or creating a system of acknowledgment can motivate others to participate actively.

4. Fostering Interpersonal Connections:

Supportive communities are built on strong interpersonal connections. These connections are the glue that holds the community together, making members feel like they are part of something larger than themselves. Community managers can foster these connections by creating opportunities for members to interact in meaningful ways.

Creating sub-groups or forums based on shared interests, hobbies, or professional fields can provide members with a more intimate space to connect. Regular virtual meetups, icebreaker sessions, or collaborative projects can also provide opportunities for members to get to know each other beyond screen names and avatars.

It's also important to recognize the value of informal interactions. Casual conversations, sharing of personal experiences, or even light-hearted banter can sometimes lead to strong, lasting connections. Community managers should facilitate and encourage such interactions, ensuring they remain respectful and within the established community norms.

5. Ensuring Safety and Conflict Resiliency:

A supportive community is one where members are safe to express themselves within the bounds of the community's goals, values, and guidelines. Ensuring this safety requires vigilant monitoring and effective conflict resiliency mechanisms. Community managers must be equipped to identify and address instances of harassment, bullying, or any other behavior that threatens the safety of members.

Proactive measures, such as clear guidelines on acceptable behavior, regular monitoring, and swift action against rule violations, can prevent many conflicts. However, when conflicts do arise, community managers must act impartially and decisively. This may involve mediating discussions between conflicting parties, taking corrective action, or, in extreme cases, removing members who consistently violate community norms.

Conflict resiliency should also involve healing and rebuilding trust within the community. This may require open conversations, apologies, or restorative practices that allow the community to move forward after a conflict.

Conclusion:

Building supportive communities is a multifaceted endeavor that requires continuous effort, empathy, and strategic thinking. By establishing inclusive norms, prioritizing mental health, encouraging knowledge sharing, fostering interpersonal connections, and ensuring safety and conflict resolution, community managers can create spaces that are not just platforms for interaction but are thriving ecosystems of support and growth.

Chapter 10. Never-Ending Evolution:



The digital landscape is constantly shifting, and so must our strategies. As community managers, we remain adaptable, willing to evolve our approaches based on new challenges and insights. This flexibility ensures that we're always at the forefront of positive change, leading our communities towards a brighter, more inclusive future.

Introduction:

Online community management is a dynamic and constantly shifting landscape. Communities grow, evolve, and encounter new challenges on a regular basis. For community managers,

understanding that the quest to create inclusive and supportive spaces is a continuous process is crucial. It's a never-ending evolution, marked by continuous learning, adaptation, and an understanding of the importance of making space for endings and closure.

Continuous Learning:

1. Embracing Curiosity:

Community managers must foster a mindset of continuous curiosity. This curiosity propels them to seek new information, insights, and perspectives that can enhance their understanding of the communities they oversee. Being open to learning from diverse sources ensures that community management strategies stay relevant and effective.

2. Updating Skills and Knowledge:

The digital landscape is fast-paced, with new tools and platforms emerging regularly. Community managers must stay abreast of technological advancements, new community management strategies, and emerging social issues to navigate changes effectively.

3. Learning from Mistakes:

Community managers are not infallible and mistakes are inevitable. These errors present opportunities for learning and growth. Reflecting on these missteps, understanding their impact, and actively working to avoid them in the future is vital.

Adaptation and Flexibility:

1. Agility in Strategies: Community needs and dynamics evolve. Strategies that were once effective may no longer be relevant. Community managers must be agile, ready to pivot their strategies to address new challenges, and adapt to the shifting needs of their community.

2. Embracing Change: Change is a constant in online communities. Community managers' ability to embrace change, lead through transitions, and assist community members in navigating these shifts is crucial for sustained success.

3. Feedback Loops: Establishing mechanisms to gather feedback ensures that community management remains responsive and adaptable. Regularly revisiting and tweaking strategies based on feedback and observed outcomes keeps the community engaged.

Toxic Positivity and Making Space for Endings:

1. Understanding Toxic Positivity: Toxic positivity refers to the overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state, resulting in the denial, minimization, or invalidation of authentic human emotional experiences. Community managers must be wary of fostering an environment where members feel pressured to present only positive aspects of their lives, thereby stifling genuine expression.

2. Acknowledging Endings: Every community evolves, and sometimes, certain aspects or even entire communities may reach a natural endpoint. Community managers must recognize and honor these endings, facilitating closure and ensuring a respectful transition.

3. Creating Space for Closure: Providing space for endings and closure is essential. Whether it's the conclusion of a discussion, the departure of a member, or the phasing out of a community feature, acknowledging the ending and allowing members to express their thoughts and feelings ensures a healthy transition.

Conclusion:

The never-ending evolution in community management reflects the dynamic nature of online spaces. By committing to continuous learning, showing flexibility, understanding the pitfalls of toxic positivity, and making space for endings, community managers ensure that their communities can navigate change effectively. This chapter emphasizes the importance of viewing community management not as a fixed goal but as an evolving journey that requires consistent effort and thoughtful navigation.

Section 3: Influencing and Inviting change at all levels



Why we Call-Out and When to Call In: A Journey Towards Transformative Justice

In the dynamic landscape of online communities, the pursuit of inclusivity and justice is not confined within the boundaries of our immediate spheres of influence. It inevitably spills over, creating ripples that extend into the broader ecosystem of community management. This section, titled "Influencing and Inviting Change at All Levels," embarks on a journey exploring the fine balance between calling out and calling in within our communities and peer networks, emphasizing the transformative potential of justice practiced at every level.

The practice of calling out — publicly pointing out and critiquing harmful behavior — can be a powerful tool for accountability. It brings attention to issues that may otherwise be overlooked and challenges patterns of injustice. On the other hand, calling in refers to addressing these issues in a more private and dialogic manner, fostering a space for learning and growth. Striking the right balance between the two approaches is crucial. It's a nuanced journey that requires discernment and empathy, ensuring that the methods employed serve the ultimate goal of transformation and healing.

Community managers, as architects of online spaces, find themselves navigating these complexities not just within their communities but also among peers and colleagues. The change initiated within one community often echoes into others, creating a cascading effect that can amplify the impact of transformative justice. As community managers engage with peers who are themselves in various stages of awakening to their own privileges, biases, and responsibilities, they contribute to an ongoing cycle of accountability and learning.

In this context, community management professionals bear an elevated responsibility. They are not just curators of their respective communities but are also stewards of transformative justice in the broader profession. By practicing transformative justice among themselves, they set precedents, share knowledge, and collectively raise the bar for what is expected and achievable in online spaces. This section delves into the complexities, challenges, and opportunities of influencing and inviting change, emphasizing that the quest for justice is both an inward and outward journey, extending from individual communities to the industry at large.

Understanding Call-Out Culture:

Call-out culture, also known as "cancel culture," refers to the practice of publicly pointing out and criticizing a person's problematic behavior, statements, or ideologies, often through social media platforms. This practice has been championed as a means for marginalized voices to highlight oppressive and harmful attitudes. It serves as a tool for holding individuals and institutions accountable for their actions, especially when traditional systems have failed to do so.

Calling Out as a Last Resort:

While calling in is a valuable approach, there are instances where calling out becomes necessary. Situations where the offending party refuses to acknowledge harm, displays repeated patterns of harmful behavior, or where there is a clear power imbalance that prevents direct dialogue may warrant a public call-out. Here, the goal shifts from fostering personal transformation to protecting the community from further harm.

Strategic Use of Calling Out:

When used as a last resort, calling out should be strategic and intentional. It is crucial to assess whether public attention will contribute to constructive change and safeguard the well-being of those affected. Care should be taken to ensure that the call-out is fact-based, respectful, and aligns with the broader goal of fostering an inclusive and just community.

While calling in should be the primary approach, there are circumstances where calling out may be necessary. Calling out becomes essential when:

1. **Previous Attempts Have Failed:** If calling in has been tried multiple times without any acknowledgment or change from the offending party, a public call-out might be the next step.
2. **Public Safety is at Risk:** For behaviors that pose a direct threat to the well-being of others, it's vital to alert the larger community.
3. **Structural Power Imbalances Exist:** In situations where power dynamics prevent private discourse, public accountability might be the only recourse.

When resorting to calling out, it's crucial to:

1. **Be Specific:** Clearly state the behavior or action that was harmful.
2. **Avoid Ad Hominem Attacks:** Focus on the behavior, not the person.
3. **Encourage Constructive Dialogue:** Even in a public forum, aim for a resolution that leads to understanding and change.

In conclusion, while call-out culture has its place, especially in situations where power imbalances are stark, calling in aligns more closely with the principles of transformative justice. It fosters a community where individuals feel safe to learn, grow, and rectify their mistakes, ultimately leading to stronger, more cohesive communities.

Conclusion:

In navigating the complexities of addressing harm, it is essential to practice a gradient of intervention that invites and supports reflection, self-accountability, and demonstration of changes in behavior. By prioritizing transformative justice and reserving calling out for situations

where it is truly necessary, communities can work towards creating spaces that are both accountable and conducive to growth and healing.

The Transformative Power of Calling In

The Importance of Calling In:

While calling out can be effective in drawing immediate and sometimes viral attention to harmful behavior, it also has the potential to create an environment of fear and defensiveness, hindering constructive dialogue. This is where the concept of "calling in" becomes essential. Calling in is a practice rooted in transformative justice, an approach that seeks to address the root causes of harm and foster healing within communities. Unlike punitive justice, which focuses on punishment, or restorative justice, which focuses on reinstating previous systems and norms, transformative justice uses moments of harm as bridges to equity, and emphasizes understanding, growth, and community-building.

Calling in practice a value of "human first" and involves privately addressing the individual responsible for the harmful behavior and engaging in a respectful dialogue. The objective is to provide an opportunity for learning and self-reflection without public humiliation. It encourages accountability while maintaining dignity and respect, thereby fostering an environment conducive to positive change.

1. **Fosters Growth and Learning:** By addressing issues privately, the person at fault is more likely to engage in a constructive dialogue, leading to genuine understanding and change.
2. **Preserves Dignity:** Calling in respects the individual's humanity, recognizing that everyone makes mistakes and can learn from them.
3. **Strengthens Relationships:** It promotes trust and understanding, crucial for maintaining cohesive communities.

The Role of Calling In in Transformative Justice:

Transformative justice recognizes that oppressive behaviors often stem from systemic and structural issues. By calling in, individuals can educate and influence one another, helping to break cycles of ignorance and prejudice. This practice aligns with the principles of transformative justice by prioritizing relationships and viewing incidents of harm as opportunities for communal growth.

Responding to a Call-In or Call-Out

Navigating the nuanced dynamics of call-ins and call-outs requires a keen understanding of the power structures at play and the relationships among community members. In this section, we delve into the intricacies of responding to call-ins and call-outs, emphasizing the pivotal role that the identity and position of the person calling you in or out can play in shaping the response. The section underscores that transformative justice is an ongoing journey, not only within the communities we manage but also among peers and colleagues who are themselves unraveling their biases and privileges.

Understanding the Dynamics: Who is Calling You Out or In Matters

The nature of the relationship between you and the person calling you in or out can significantly influence how you should respond. Here are some considerations and tailored advice for different populations:

1. Power Above (e.g., Supervisors, Executives):

- Be Respectful and Open: Show willingness to learn and adapt. Understand that feedback from those above can often be tied to organizational goals.
- Seek Clarification: If the feedback is unclear, ask questions respectfully to ensure you fully comprehend the concern.

2. Equal-Peers (e.g., Colleagues, Fellow Community Managers):

- Engage in Dialogue: Foster an environment of mutual learning and growth. Share perspectives and be open to receiving feedback.
- Practice Empathy: Understand that peers might be facing similar challenges. Collaborate to find solutions.

3. Community Members:

- Validate Experiences: Acknowledge the experiences and feelings of community members. Their feedback is essential for community health.
- Be Transparent: Clearly communicate any changes or actions taken in response to feedback.

4. Critics (e.g., External Critics, Challengers):

- Assess Validity: Determine if the criticism is constructive or meant to provoke thought. Respond to valid concerns.
- Understand and Intervene: Recognize the healthy needs and motivations of critics, often termed as 'trolls', and work to indirectly intervene and prevent harmful behavior. Reframe these individuals as challengers signaling a structural flaw in the community design. By understanding their motivations, most challengers can be guided, educated, and recruited into becoming active and healthy community members.

Conclusion:

The dynamics of call-ins and call-outs are complex and multifaceted. By understanding the subtle nuances of power and relationship, community managers can navigate these situations effectively. The ultimate goal is to create spaces where transformative justice is practiced consistently, and feedback becomes a tool for collective growth and community resilience.

Responding to a Call-In

Effectively responding to a call-in or call-out is crucial for maintaining respect and promoting growth within a community. Here's how one can constructively engage when being called in or out:

1. Listen and Reflect: Take the time to understand the concern raised without getting defensive. Reflect on your actions and their impact.
2. Acknowledge: Validate the feelings and experiences of the person calling you in.
3. Apologize and Learn: If you realize your mistake, apologize sincerely and take steps to educate yourself and avoid repeating the behavior.
4. Engage in Dialogue: Be open to discussion and seek clarity if needed. This shows your commitment to growth and understanding.
5. Follow Up: Demonstrate through your actions that you've taken the feedback to heart.

Responding to a Call-Out

1. Stay Calm: Public criticism can be overwhelming. Stay composed and avoid reacting impulsively.
2. Assess the Validity: Evaluate the points raised objectively. Is there truth to the concerns voiced?
3. Acknowledge and Apologize Publicly: If the call-out is justified, acknowledge the mistake and apologize publicly, demonstrating accountability. If the call-out seems unjustified, understand that there can be disparities of what feels like justice on a personal level (who you are as a person and professional) and in the larger picture or macro-level image of the behavior being pointed out, you may still be guilty in the eyes of the general public. Consider reframing this moment as an opportunity to sacrifice some of your image in the name of transformative justice, as see this as an opportunity to model a "yield and repair" response in service of the greater good.
4. Commit to Change: Outline the steps you will take to rectify the situation and ensure it doesn't happen again.
5. Private Conversation: If appropriate, you may also reach out privately to the person who called you out to further discuss and understand their concerns.

6. Reflect on the Experience: Consider why the situation escalated to a call-out and how similar situations can be prevented in the future.

Conclusion

Whether responding to a call-in or a call-out, the principles of respect, accountability, and a commitment to growth should guide the interaction. By approaching these situations with humility and a willingness to learn, individuals and communities can transform moments of conflict into opportunities for strengthening relationships and fostering inclusivity.

The Process of Calling In and Ensuring Genuine Intent

Influencing and Inviting Change at All Levels

In the evolving landscape of community management, transformative justice is not just a goal but an ongoing practice that requires awareness, humility, and continual learning. This section delves into the nuanced process of 'Calling In', an approach that seeks to gently and privately correct harmful behaviors while fostering an environment of understanding and accountability. The process is not a one-size-fits-all strategy but rather a delicate maneuver that takes into consideration power dynamics, context, and the individuals involved.

Understanding Power Dynamics in Calling In

The act of calling someone in is profoundly affected by the power dynamics at play. Here, we explore how these dynamics shape the call-in process and what community managers can do to tailor their approach:

1. Power Above (Leadership, Executives, etc.):

- Explanation: Calling in those in positions of authority requires tact and clarity. The objective is to educate without appearing confrontational.

- Advice: Approach with data, illustrating how a certain bias or behavior can impact the community negatively. Suggest alternatives and frame it as an opportunity for positive change.

2. Equal-Peers (Fellow Community Managers, Colleagues, etc.):

- Explanation: With peers, the interaction is often more horizontal, allowing for open dialogue.

- Advice: Be candid yet respectful. Share resources and experiences that have shaped your understanding, encouraging a shared journey towards awareness.

3. Community Members:

- Explanation: These are the individuals for whom the community is built. The relationship here is often one of stewardship.

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- Advice: Approach with empathy, acknowledging their experiences while gently guiding them towards understanding the impact of their words or actions.

4. Critics:

- Explanation: Critics, whether internal or external, can offer valuable insights if approached correctly.
- Advice: Listen to their concerns, validate their feelings, and engage in a dialogue that seeks to find common ground while educating on harmful biases.

Tailoring the Approach

Recognizing that each interaction is unique, community managers must be adaptable in their approach to calling in. Being aware of power dynamics and the context of the interaction is crucial. It's important to approach each situation with genuine intent, ensuring that the process is not just performative but rooted in the desire to foster understanding and inclusivity.

Conclusion

As community managers engage in the transformative journey of influencing and inviting change, they must be mindful of their own biases, power dynamics, and the diverse range of stakeholders they interact with. By practicing thoughtful 'Calling In', they can create spaces that are not only safe but also resilient, fostering a culture of accountability, learning, and growth.

1. Steps of Calling In:

- a. Identify the Behavior: Before addressing someone, be clear about what behavior or comment was problematic and why.
- b. Choose the Right Time and Setting: Approach the person privately, ensuring it's a good time for both parties to have a meaningful conversation.
- c. Use "I" Statements: Frame the conversation around your feelings and observations to avoid putting the other person on the defensive. For instance, "I noticed..." or "I felt uncomfortable when..."
- d. Ask Open-Ended Questions: Encourage dialogue by asking questions that allow the individual to reflect and respond.
- e. Provide Context: Sometimes, people aren't aware of the larger issues tied to their comments or behaviors. Offer information or resources that can help them understand.
- f. Avoid Blame: The goal is to educate and promote understanding, not to accuse.

2. Inviting Participation from Those Harmed:

- a. Acknowledge Harm Done: Recognize that harm has occurred, whether intentional or not.

- b. **Seek Feedback:** Before addressing the issue, consult with those harmed to understand their feelings and perspective.
- c. **Provide Space for Voices:** If they're comfortable, allow those harmed to share their experiences directly.
- d. **Support Their Choices:** Some may choose to engage, while others may not. Respect their choices without pressuring them.
- e. **Collaborate on Solutions:** Work together to find ways to address and rectify the harm.

3. Checking the Rescuer Complex:

- a. **Self-Reflection:** Regularly evaluate your motives. Are you trying to "save" others or genuinely aiming to support and empower?
- b. **Educate Yourself:** Understand the history and dynamics of the communities or individuals you're working with. This prevents unintentional harm and ensures you're not perpetuating stereotypes.
- c. **Listen More, Speak Less:** Prioritize the voices and experiences of marginalized groups. They are the experts of their own experiences.
- d. **Seek Feedback:** Encourage those around you to call you out or in if they notice problematic behavior.
- e. **Avoid Centering Yourself:** The focus should always be on the community or individuals you're supporting, not on your own actions or feelings.
- f. **Acknowledge Privilege:** Recognize the privileges you have and how they impact your perspective and interactions.

Conclusion

Calling in, when done correctly, fosters understanding and growth. However, it's essential to ensure that the process centers those harmed and is free from self-serving motives. By continuously reflecting on one's intentions and actions and prioritizing the voices and needs of marginalized communities, one can engage in genuine allyship and support.

Recognizing Performative Allyship

Performative allyship occurs when an individual or organization professes support for a marginalized group but does so to gain social capital rather than genuinely advocate for that group. It's essential to recognize these behaviors in oneself and others to ensure that allyship is authentic and constructive.

In Oneself:

1. Self-Examination:

- Reflect on your motivations. Are you speaking out or taking action to appear progressive or to genuinely contribute to positive change?
- Consider whether your actions are consistent and sustained or if they only occur when they are publicly visible.

2. Centering Self:

- Assess if your actions or conversations tend to center around your feelings, experiences, or efforts rather than the experiences of the marginalized group.
- Be cautious of using allyship as a way to seek validation or praise.

3. Lack of Continued Education:

- If your engagement with issues is superficial and doesn't involve ongoing self-education, it may be indicative of performative allyship.

4. Inaction and Silence in Private Spaces:

- Evaluate whether your allyship is consistent in both public and private spaces. Performative allyship often falls short when there is no audience.

In Others:

1. Inconsistency in Actions and Statements:

- Observe if an individual's or organization's public statements of support are not followed by consistent, meaningful actions.
- For instance, a company may post a supportive message during Pride Month but have discriminatory policies or practices.

2. Co-opting Movements:

- Be wary of individuals or organizations that attempt to redirect focus from the original intent of a movement to their own agendas.

3. Overemphasis on Symbolism:

- While symbols can be powerful, an overreliance on symbolic gestures (like posting on social media) without substantive action may indicate performative allyship.

4. Ignoring Feedback:

- If individuals or organizations dismiss or become defensive when given feedback from the marginalized communities they claim to support, this can be a red flag.

5. Lack of Accountability:

- Genuine allies acknowledge mistakes and learn from them. Performative allies may avoid taking responsibility when their actions cause harm.

Conclusion:

Recognizing performative allyship involves assessing motivations, actions, and consistency in advocating for marginalized groups. By being vigilant and self-reflective, individuals and organizations can work towards authentic and effective allyship that contributes meaningfully to social justice and equity.

Introduction: A Call to Action for Community Managers Worldwide

In today's digital age, online communities serve as vital spaces for connection, dialogue, and shared experiences. Community managers, the architects of these spaces, bear the responsibility of ensuring that they are inclusive, safe, and equitable. In this context, transformative justice – which seeks to address harm, heal divisions, and create systemic change – holds immense potential. We appeal to community managers worldwide to share examples and stories of how transformative justice has been woven into the fabric of online community management.

Section 4: Calling All for Transformative Justice in Online Communities



An Appeal and Opportunity for Community Managers Worldwide

Community managers across the globe are at the forefront of sculpting the online landscape. This section serves as both an appeal and an opportunity for community managers worldwide to share examples of transformative justice in online community management. By fostering inclusive conversations, challenging norms, and promoting equitable practices, community managers can turn digital spaces into hubs of positive transformation.

Facilitating Inclusive Conversations:

1. Safe Spaces: Community managers act as custodians of digital environments, ensuring online platforms are welcoming and protective. Their active role in setting guidelines and moderating discussions safeguards members from cyberbullying and hate speech.

Exercise: Host a virtual town hall meeting inviting community members to collaboratively define community guidelines, ensuring a shared understanding of safety.

2. Addressing Harm: Community managers swiftly tackle harm and mediate conflicts, preserving the integrity and harmony of the space.

Exercise: Conduct a workshop presenting scenarios of online harm, and collectively brainstorm solutions.

Challenging and Changing Norms:

3. Amplifying Marginalized Voices: Community managers ensure that diverse voices, especially those often marginalized, are heard and valued.

Exercise: Initiate a monthly feature spotlighting stories from diverse community members.

4. Educational Content: Proactive sharing of educational content helps community managers foster an environment of continuous learning.

Exercise: Host a virtual book club or documentary viewing focusing on social justice issues.

Transformative Justice in Practice:

5. Restorative Conversations: Community managers facilitate restorative conversations, emphasizing healing and understanding.

Exercise: Organize role-playing sessions to practice facilitating restorative conversations.

6. Policy and Culture Shifts: Community managers can drive positive changes by reassessing and evolving community guidelines.

Exercise: Conduct a quarterly review for community feedback on policies.

Promoting Equity and Diversity:

7. Accessibility: Ensuring digital spaces are accessible to everyone is crucial.

Exercise: Invite an expert to audit and recommend improvements for digital accessibility.

8. Representation: Deliberate efforts should be made to ensure diverse representation in content and discussions.

Exercise: Perform a diversity audit of featured content and identify areas for improvement.

Continuous Learning and Adaptation:

9. Feedback Loops: Community managers should actively seek feedback and be open to constructive criticism.

Exercise: Distribute a regular feedback form for community members.

10. Adapting Strategies: Community managers must stay abreast of evolving trends to maintain the community's relevance.

Exercise: Host bi-annual workshops discussing the latest trends in community management.

Inclusive Hiring Practices for Community Management Positions:

Inclusive hiring practices ensure that community management teams are diverse and well-equipped to handle the nuances of different perspectives.

Exercises:

1. Diversity in Recruitment: Audit your current hiring practices to identify biases and barriers to diversity. Implement changes to make the process more inclusive.

2. Unbiased Job Descriptions: Ensure that job descriptions are written in a neutral tone and are inclusive.

3. Inclusive Interview Panels: Create diverse interview panels to mitigate biases during the selection process.

Calling In Peer Community Managers:

Introduction:

It's crucial to address instances where peer community managers may unknowingly promote biased or prejudicial content.

Exercises:

1. Open Dialogue: Practice having conversations with peers to address and rectify biased content.

2. Educational Resources: Share resources that can help peers understand and rectify biases.
3. Regular Check-ins: Establish regular check-ins with peers to discuss and reflect on content and ensure it aligns with community values.

Community managers are instrumental in molding the ethos of online communities. By embedding transformative justice principles, they ensure these spaces are not just safe havens but also catalysts for positive societal change. We invite community managers globally to contribute their experiences and insights, enriching the collective understanding of transformative justice in online community management.

Conclusion

As we navigate the complexities of the digital age, the realm of online communities stands as an illustrative microcosm of society at large. This comprehensive exploration underscores the urgency and potential of embedding transformative justice principles into online community management.

Revisiting the Transformative Approach

Section 1 dissected the nuances of online community management, emphasizing the shift from punitive to transformative justice. The diverse range of online community harms, from irritating behaviors to more severe instances like doxing and swatting, necessitate a versatile and empathetic approach. By proactively addressing these harms through the transformative justice framework, community managers can foster environments that are resilient, inclusive, and conducive to positive interactions.

The Personal Journey

Section 2 delved into the introspective journey every community manager must undertake. Recognizing one's biases, prejudices, and privileges is the first step towards effective allyship and co-conspiratorship. This journey, punctuated by continuous self-reflection and learning, allows community managers to disrupt toxic norms and champion inclusivity through language and action.

Influence and Change

Section 3 highlighted the importance of influencing change at all levels. Navigating the dynamics of call-out culture and embracing the transformative power of calling in are pivotal. The ability to respond effectively to both call-outs and call-ins, while recognizing performative allyship, equips community managers to instigate genuine and lasting change.

A Collective Call to Action

Section 4 culminated with a collective call for transformative justice in online communities. Through strategic initiatives and actionable steps, community managers can facilitate inclusive conversations and challenge existing norms. The case studies and testimonials brought to light the practical implications and the transformative potential of these strategies.

The Road Ahead

In essence, the quest for transformative justice in online communities is a multifaceted and ongoing endeavor. From the individual's acknowledgment of biases to the collective effort towards fostering supportive and resilient communities, every step is integral to the larger journey.

Community managers, by embracing transformative justice, can become catalysts for change, ensuring that online spaces are not just reflections of society but are, in fact, harbingers of a more just, empathetic, and inclusive future. The toolkit, strategies, and narratives explored in this discourse underscore that the pursuit of transformative justice is not just a professional obligation but a societal imperative.

In conclusion, the journey towards transformative justice is undeniably challenging, yet profoundly rewarding. It requires continuous effort, learning, and adaptation. By harnessing the principles of transformative justice, online communities can evolve into spaces that celebrate diversity, foster resilience, and continually strive for a harmonious co-existence. Thus, the call for transformative justice in online communities is not a destination but an ever-evolving journey towards creating digital spaces that mirror our highest aspirations for society.

Acknowledgements

References and Further Reading

We will Not Cancel Us

Fumbling Towards Repair - A workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators

Just Work

Beyond Survival

The Conscious Communicator

1. "Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need" by Sasha Costanza-Chock
 - This book explores how design influences communities and how community-led design can foster justice.
2. Community Signal Podcast
 - A podcast addressing various aspects of community management, including episodes discussing moderation, justice, and inclusivity.
3. "The Little Book of Transformative Community Conferencing" by David Anderson Hooker
 - A practical guide to understanding transformative justice principles and applying them in community settings.
4. Creative Mornings: Transformative Justice and Community Safety
 - This video lecture explains the basics of transformative justice and its application.
5. "The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities" edited by Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
 - A collection of essays discussing transformative justice within activist communities.
6. Coursera: Content, Advertising & Social IMC
 - This course provides insights into community management, content moderation, and ethical considerations.
7. Restorative Justice Online Blog
 - A blog with resources and articles on restorative justice, some of which discuss the transformative aspects of justice.
8. "Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators" by Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan
 - This workbook provides practical tools and exercises for facilitating transformative justice community accountability processes.
9. Community Roundtable

Calling In Community Management: Understanding and Applying a Transformative Justice Lens

- An organization that offers resources, research, and training for community professionals, including discussions on ethics and justice.

10. "Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds" by adrienne maree brown

- This book discusses transformative approaches to social justice and community organizing, and can be applied to community management as well.

These resources offer a mix of practical advice, theoretical frameworks, and real-world examples to help individuals interested in community management and transformative justice deepen their understanding and apply these principles in their work.

Appendix

Education Sessions