

NOBODY

LIKES TO DANCE ALONE

How To Grow A Social Media Community
by Jeremy Miller



AN AUDIENCE WILL PLATEAU, BUT A COMMUNITY IS BOUNDARYLESS

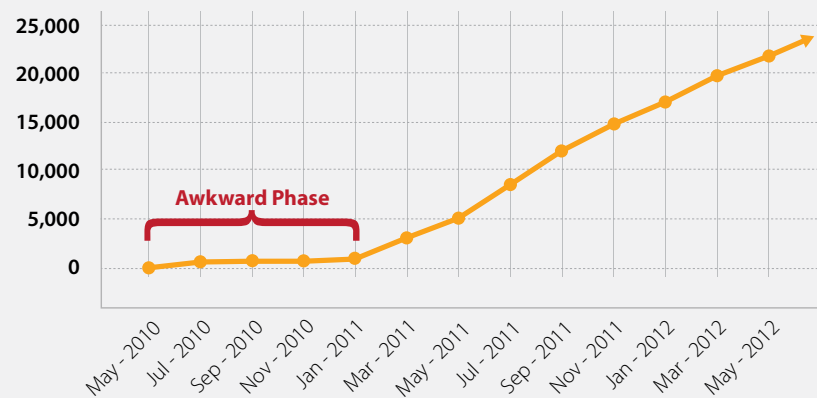
Relationships are the essence of a sticky brand. We fall in and out of love with products, but human relationships are far more lasting. It's people that make brands sticky.

The challenge is relationship building is time consuming. There are only so many hours in the day for lunches, phone calls and emails. And there is only so much marketing can do to scale human relationships. If you want to make an impact and scale your relationships you need a community. **Leading and building social media communities is the secret sauce for really scaling your brand, your network and your relationships.**

Nobody Likes To Dance Alone is a guide for how to grow a boundaryless social media community, and it draws on my experience growing one of the largest branding groups on LinkedIn. In less than two years my LinkedIn group,

[Sticky Branding](#), grew to over 22,000 members.

STICKY BRANDING GROUP MEMBERSHIP



You have an opportunity to grow a boundaryless community too. The challenge is getting through the starting plateau. The first few months of growing a group is the hardest part. It feels like leading an awkward middle school dance. In *Nobody Likes To Dance Alone* I will take you through the process of how to grow through the awkward phase to build a boundaryless social media group.

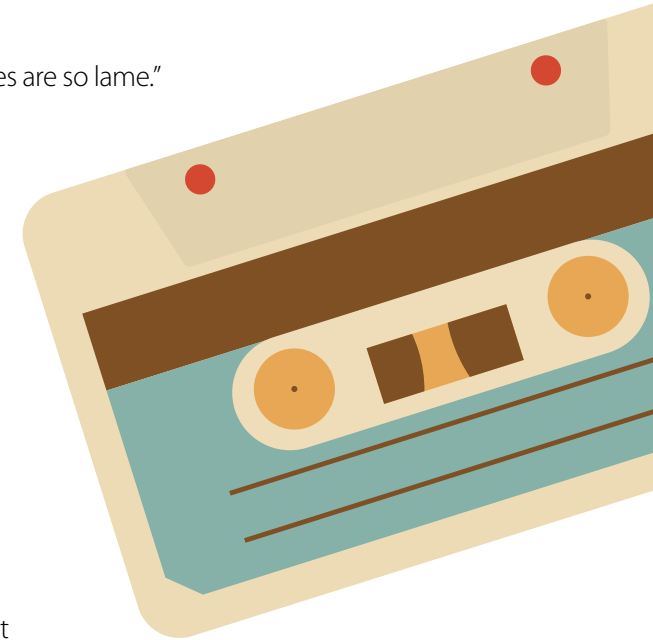
WHERE'S THE PARTY?

Do you remember attending your junior high dances? I have vague memories of mine, and the prevailing thought is *awkward*. The girls on one side of the gymnasium, the boys on the other. Little cliques of kids shuffling around, making small talk and secretly waiting for something to happen.

You can hear the chatter among the groups. The jocks are saying, "These dances are so lame." A few others are complaining about the DJ, and the music is too slow. But these gripes are all superficial. No one wants to be the first to dance. They're waiting.

Unbeknown to the agitated teens the DJ has a plan. The DJ knows nothing will happen until the cool girls start dancing. He starts things off with a few popular songs to get people tapping their feet, and then drops his secret weapon: *80's music*. It's hard not to get sucked onto the dance floor with retro hits from Michael Jackson and Madonna. The DJ only gives a taste of the 80's, and then leads with the top hits of the moment. I suspect today it would be songs from Katy Perry, Rihanna and Justin Bieber.

Things start to get moving. The cool girls break the ice and set the culture for others to hop in and get involved. The kids start pouring onto the dance floor, because it's safe and socially acceptable to dance. The kids can leave the comfort and protection of their cliques and start shuffling their feet.



It's a little strange to remember the moments and dynamics of middle school dances, and before 2010 I really hadn't given them any thought. They were distant memories until I started building my company's social media community. Then the memories came rushing back. The awkwardness. The struggle to get people involved. The skepticism that the group would be fun or worthwhile. The fear that no one would actually come. My foray into building a social media community brought back all the fears, uncertainty and self-deprecating thoughts I felt in grade eight.

In May 2010, my team and I launched a small LinkedIn Group called [Sticky Branding](#). We started the group with a vision to engage our clients, friends and networks in discussions on the changing world of branding, sales and marketing. These are topics we geek out on every day, and we thought it would be cool if we could draw together a group of engaged people who shared in our passions and expertise.

Like all communities, my group started out small—five people to be exact. We formed the group, seeded it with our content and invited everyone we knew. In the first month three hundred people joined the group, and we were over the moon. Then it dawned on us—no one was talking. We would get a comment here or there, but no sustained conversations. This was the moment when all those middle school dance memories rushed back. We had a room of three hundred wallflowers. If we did not create a party this group was going to fizzle and die.

When you look along the social media highway you will find countless LinkedIn Groups and Facebook Pages that have been abandoned. They are virtual ghost towns. There are over 1.3 million groups on LinkedIn, but only 3% of them have 1,000 or more members, and less than 0.017% of groups break 10,000 members. Vibrant, engaged and growing social media communities are not the average.

My group wasn't any different. If my team and I did not invest in the group, get conversations started and get our members dancing then we were going to wind up being one of the average LinkedIn Groups—a failure.

"Nobody likes to dance alone" became the mantra to growing our LinkedIn group. If we didn't create the party, no one would. If we didn't nurture an inviting and welcoming environment that fostered conversations, no one would. If we didn't invite everyone we knew and increase awareness of the group, no one would. We realized the group's success was completely dependent on our commitment to grow a dynamic community.

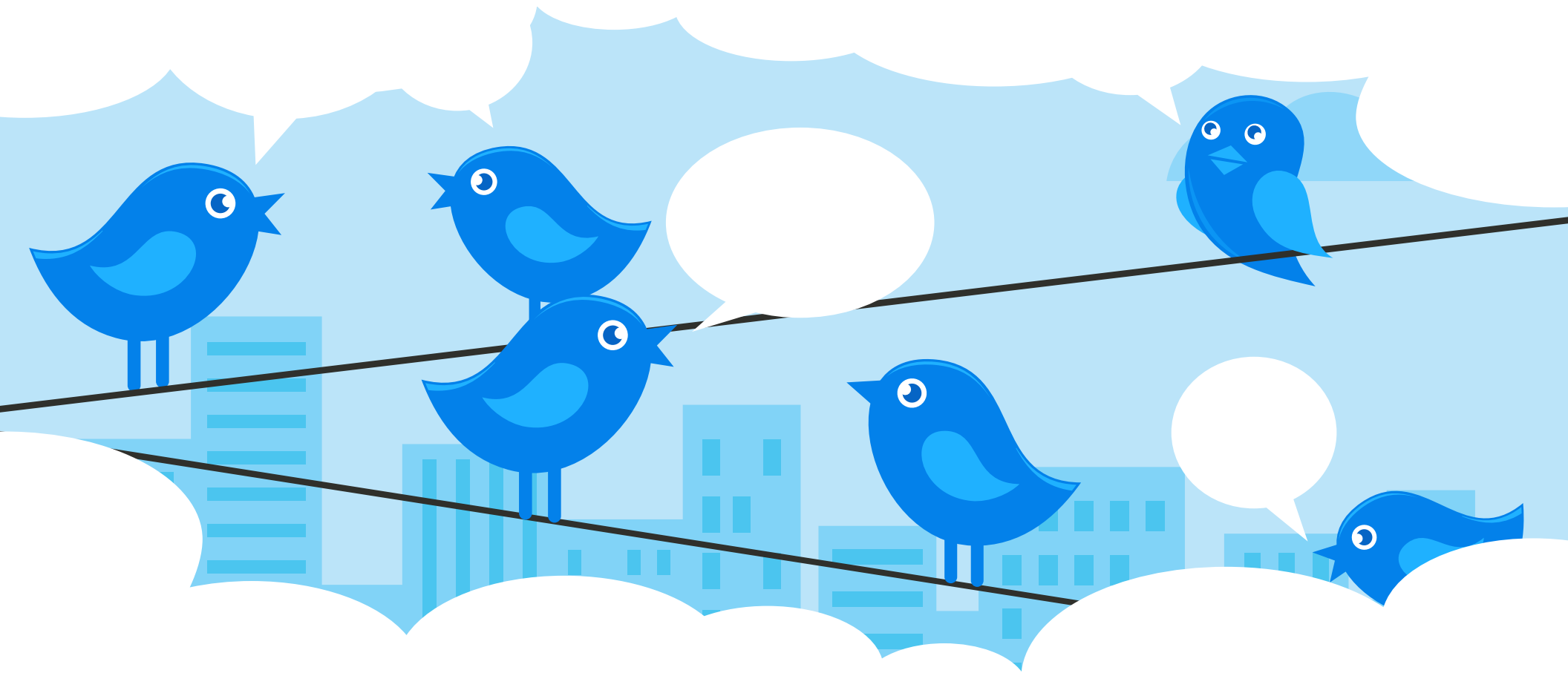
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It was a tough, uncomfortable experience growing our community, but I'm glad we persevered. The Sticky Branding group grew through the awkward phase and blossomed into one of the largest branding groups on LinkedIn. By May 2012, the group's two year anniversary, the Sticky Branding group had **over 22,000 members!**

These principles are the same for you. Growing a social media group to over 1,000 members is very doable, and growing your group into a community—a group that grows organically and draws in like-minded people—is equally achievable. The challenge is to get through the awkward wallflower phase, and create a party that can take on a life of its own. “Nobody likes to dance alone” is the mantra for growing your social media community.

I would like to share with you how we grew our social media group from 5 to 22,000 members in two years with some practical ideas and tactics you can use to build your own community.



SHOULD YOU REALLY INVEST IN A SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNITY?

Before we dive into the discussion of how to grow a social media group, let's take a step back and ask "why?"

It is easy to see the successes brands like Starbucks and Deloitte are having with social media, and think "I want that." Starbucks has over 30 million Likes on Facebook, and Deloitte has over 95,000. We hear it too. Our LinkedIn Group has over 22,000 members and is growing organically week-over-week. People see these successes and want to replicate them for their own businesses.

But before you dive into building your own community, ask yourself a few questions:

	Yes	No
Are you willing to be a leader?		
Are you willing to commit one hour per day, seven days a week to the community?		
Are you willing to grow a community that benefits others first?		
Are you willing to go out of your comfort zone and give of yourself for the success of the community and its members?		
Are you willing to invest in a group if there is no direct financial gain from it?		

If you answered “No” to any of these questions, stop, don’t pass Go, don’t collect \$200. Chances are that growing a social media community is not for you.

The last question in the survey is the most important one: *are you willing to invest in a group if there is no direct financial gain?* A social media community is not a lead generation platform. If you are building a social media community for sales leads—stop right there. There are far faster and easier ways to generate leads such as direct marketing, pay-per-click campaigns and other tactical promotions.

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*PEOPLE SEE RIGHT THROUGH
MARKETING-DRIVEN GROUPS
AND AVOID THEM. ”*

Social media communities are perceived as excellent lead generation platforms, but that is not accurate. Having thousands of followers does not mean you can market to them. Actually, it is unlikely you can get thousands of followers or get the group dancing if the purpose of your community is lead generation. People see right through marketing-driven groups and *avoid them*.

The value of a community is in its people. It’s in the connections, the relationships, and the opportunities to learn and share with others. It’s in the opportunities to organize and work with a disparate group of people to do something greater than yourself.

If you answered “Yes” to the questions and you are committed to organizing and growing a vibrant community, the potential is immense.

WHAT'S IN A COMMUNITY? RELATIONSHIPS!

As much as I step on the brakes regarding all the reasons why you shouldn't build a social media community, I am a huge proponent of them. They are powerful branding and business development tools, because at their core, communities are based on relationships.

The Sticky Branding group has brought my business three key benefits:

Credibility. Leading a successful group brings your business credibility. Robert Cialdini writes in his seminal book *Influence*, "When a lot of people are doing something, it is the right thing to do." The size of your group is social proof that you are a leader. As the Sticky Branding group has grown, more and more people have sought out our advice and perspective. They see the size and success of the group, and it provides social proof of our firm's capabilities. It demonstrates our leadership, our commitment to our community, and that others are interested in our point of view.

Opportunities. The Sticky Branding group has grown our network and our relationships far beyond anything we could have done through traditional networking means. When the group was founded the bulk of our members were based in Toronto where our office is located. Now only 4% of the group's membership is in Toronto. This has allowed us to connect and build relationships with people throughout the US, Europe and Asia. The group has provided us a unique vantage point for developing our services, serving our clients, building partnerships and sourcing new ideas.

New business. Even though a community shouldn't be built with the intent to generate leads, the Sticky Branding group *has* brought us new business. It has increased our lead generation by 20%, and opened us up to opportunities and connections we would never have been exposed to. These leads are unique, because we did not request them or market for them. They happened organically. Connections led to conversations, which led to relationships. Those relationships generated both referrals and clients.

The value of a community is in its relationships. It is the act of sharing, participating and connecting with like-minded people that creates so much opportunity. And what I love about communities is they are highly scalable.

My social media philosophy has been governed by my mantra: **an audience will plateau, but a community is boundaryless.** Leading and building communities is the secret sauce for really scaling your network and relationships.

Traditional marketing activities always plateau. They are limited by resources: time, money and people. You may be able to reach thousands, but reaching millions can be cost-prohibitive.



Communities change this dynamic. Communities scale, because like-minded people join, share and organically refer new members. Your network grows, because others are drawing in their networks too. That collective experience creates a branding and business development platform that is hard to replicate.

Sales is based on relationships. Your customers will not buy from you unless they like you, trust you and find you credible. The traditional way of growing sales is by getting belly-to-belly and knee-to-knee with customers to create relationships. Community building has a similar effect. You may not be able to see the whites of your members' eyes in a social media group, but you will be engaging them in conversation and helping each other. Those interactions add up and lead to relationships, which lead to inquiries and referrals. These referrals are far more powerful than anything you could get from a Google search result or a response to an inbound marketing lead, because they are steeped in relationships and goodwill.

The challenge is creating a community that scales. If you don't have a community that grows organically then you are not building a relationship platform that drives credibility, opportunities and new business. This is where *Nobody Likes To Dance Alone* starts. Growing a social media community is like getting a dance started. You've got to go through the awkward phase of bringing people together and getting them to dance in order for your community to scale.

“ *LEADING AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES IS THE SECRET SAUCE FOR REALLY SCALING YOUR NETWORK AND RELATIONSHIPS.* ”



A PARTY STARTS WITH A THEME: THE POINT OF SHARING™

What's more exciting for a teenager, a regular dance or a Beach Party dance? The Beach Party dance of course. Great parties have a theme, and communities are the same. What is your community all about? What is its theme?

Communities are drawn together through a Point of Sharing™: shared interests, shared values or shared experiences. They come together to learn, connect or do something impactful. Finding this connective glue—the Point of Sharing™—is the theme of your group.

Your group can have one of three Points of Sharing™:

Shared Interests. Most business groups are based on a shared interest. The largest LinkedIn Groups are all founded on shared interests: jobs, human resources, accounting, residential real estate, marketing and social media marketing. For example the Social Media Marketing group is for people interested in social media marketing, and the On Startups group is for entrepreneurs with startup businesses. The [Sticky Branding](#) group fits in the shared interest category too. Our members are brought together with a shared interest in branding and growing companies that stand out.



Shared Values. Groups based on shared values are also popular. They tend to be more personal and universal with topics like the environment, religion, equality, human rights and preventing poverty. They are ideals people believe in and are passionate about. People not only love to talk about their values, they like to work with others to act on them too. A group organized on shared values can be very productive.

Shared Experiences. Shared experiences are not as common in corporate communities, but they are equally relevant. The best way to describe a shared experience is the phrase, “it takes two to know one.” Shared experiences come in many forms. They can be life-changing events like an accident or a divorce, or they can come from growing up as a minority in a certain culture. The experience brings like-minded people together who form a bond around their shared experience.



COMMUNITIES ARE DRAWN TOGETHER THROUGH SHARING: SHARED INTERESTS, SHARED VALUES OR SHARED EXPERIENCES.”

What is your group all about? Do you have a shared interest, shared value or shared experience to anchor your group on? What I’m asking, “What is the theme of your group?” The more purposefully and clearly you can articulate your group’s Point of Sharing™ the better it will do.

To find your Point of Sharing™, follow your passions:

1. What topics are you naturally drawn to?
2. What do you talk about with people at the office or at cocktail parties?
3. What do you “geek out” on?

What were the quick answers that came to mind and seemed obvious—maybe a little too obvious? This is your starting point. Finding your theme does not take a lot of thought. Your gut reaction reveals a lot about your Point of Sharing™, because you are naturally drawn to it.

Next look at your network, and how your passions and interests fit with it. Do others share your interests?

Are they naturally drawn to them? If so, great. You are onto something. If not, take a step back and think more broadly.

Finding a theme for your community requires looking for universal ideas that people naturally select. If the theme is obtuse or too narrow then you will spend all your time trying to sell people on why they should join your group. This will slow down or even stunt the growth of your group, but if people see a topic that sparks their interest they will join on their own accord. And if the group lives up to their expectations, they will talk about it and encourage their friends and colleagues to join too. Finding a universal theme that resonates is the starting point for creating a group that scales.



WHAT'S IN A NAME? EVERYTHING!

Once you find your Point of Sharing™, it needs a name. A name that stands out, draws attention to the group, and gives people a sense of what the group is all about. You need a great name.

Avoid one of the most common naming mistakes. The fastest way to stunt the growth of your social media community is to name it after your company. That is a clear way to show the world your group is all about you and selling your stuff. You're not hosting a birthday party or an anniversary, you're creating a party. A party that others will want to attend, invite their friends to, get involved with and make it their own. **It's not about you, it's about everyone else.**

A big part of the Sticky Branding group's success is in its name*. In December 2010, the group began to accelerate. We had been growing slowly by ten to thirty new members per week for the first eight months, but then we turned a corner. We started growing by two to three hundred new members a week! Even more exciting, we were drawing in members that did not have any personal connections to us, and they were connecting to us from all over the world.

*The Sticky Branding group's name is a bit of an anomaly. Contrary to my advice, the group name is the same as the company's name. This is strategic. We chose the company name specifically for digital marketing. Our Point of Sharing™ resonates throughout our brand, and all of our content properties. If your company name can act as your group's Point of Sharing™, then by all means run with it. But these situations are unusual. Rather than rebranding your company, brand your social media community with a name that scales.

To understand why our group was growing so quickly we surveyed the new members. We asked them how they found the Sticky Branding group and why they joined. Almost everyone said, “I saw a friend join, I liked the name, and I wanted to find out more.”

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THE FASTEST WAY TO STUNT THE GROWTH OF YOUR GROUP IS TO NAME IT AFTER YOUR COMPANY.”

There are over 40,000 marketing groups on LinkedIn. When you do a search of the LinkedIn Group Directory you are not presented with a lot of information. You will see the group name, a small blurb and a little logo. If you search “branding”, the Sticky Branding group comes up at the top of the list. It has

a name that resonates with users. It’s a universal concept and one that our members identify with.

People were not joining the Sticky Branding group because of our company—they were joining because the name resonated with them. They understood the group’s theme, its Point of Sharing™, and they wanted to be a part of that experience. They were joining a group of people striving to grow their own sticky brands.

A group’s name signals its theme. **What are you going to call your group?**

As you distill your group’s Point of Sharing™, try to package it in a name that clearly articulates the experience and the purpose of the group. Communities that scale make it easy for people to know they belong. If you get the name right it will accelerate your group’s growth.

When I name a group I look for **a few key ingredients**:

1. **No invented words or acronyms.** Invented names like Verizon or acronyms like SAP require a lot of marketing and advertising to seed the name in the public's lexicon. Made up words will slow down the growth of your group. Use the language of your customers to express what the group is about.
2. **Two to three words.** Long names are hard to remember and hard to refer. Choose a simple name or phrase to articulate what your group is about.
3. **Be expressive.** The name doesn't have to be dull or obvious. Put together words or phrases that are evocative and experiential. Think of descriptive names like *Permission Marketing*, the *Tipping Point* or the *Long Tail* as examples of names created by combining unrelated words.

It is a process. Dig into your Point of Sharing™ and try to understand why people join, and then combine words to find an evocative phrase. Have fun with the process. You will know you've found the right name when you see it. It will feel right, it will be exciting and it might even scare you a little. When you find that name hold onto it. You've got something special.



MAKE IT SPECIAL AND SETUP THE VENUE

The most memorable middle school dances engage everyone from the start. It's exciting to walk into the school gymnasium and see it transformed with bright colors, pulsating lights, banners, streamers and balloons all arranged to impress and dazzle the attendees.

The theme of my grade eight year-end dance was Beach Party. The DJ was setup in a boat. The organizers had arranged the tables and covered them with paper maché and fabric to make the DJ station look like a yacht. Along one wall was a large fan blowing big blue sheets to create the impression of rolling waves. The other wall was lined with long tables with punch bowls and snacks, all resting in piles of sand. It was pretty remarkable. The organizers had paid attention to the little details. When you walked in the gym, you immediately understood the theme and wanted to participate.

Before announcing your group to the world, set it up. Take a page from the overzealous eighth graders, and sweat the little things. Create the atmosphere before inviting everyone you know.

Each social media platform has different processes to configure a group. At the most basic level they ask for a group name, group overview, group description, group logo and a few other details. These are the basics. Everyone fills out the required fields, but go further. Start feeding the group with content, conversations and experiences.

Before launching the Sticky Branding group we spent a couple of weeks loading up the space with content and conversations. We shared articles and videos, posted links to marketing resources, and created targeted discussions. We wanted a rich, inviting experience for our new members—one with plenty of opportunities to find great content and engage others in conversation.

What type of setup will set the tone for your group and get people dancing? Build a project plan of the conversations, content and information that you will need to create an amazing first impression.

A COMMUNITY STARTS WITH 1,000 MEMBERS

Getting the first 1,000 members is the biggest challenge, but it is essential. The party doesn't start until you cross the 1,000 member mark.

According to Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody* and *Cognitive Surplus*, groups function best between eight and sixteen people or more than a thousand members. He writes, "It's surprisingly hard to operate between the intimate scale of dozens and the public scale of thousands or more. This middle scale, something like a hundred people, is often too big to operate as a single group but too small to become socially self-sustaining."

Shirky goes on to say, "Being a participant in a midsize group often feels lousy, because you get neither the pleasures of tight interconnection nor the advantages of urban scale and diversity." This middle ground is the awkward dance phase. It is the period between starting the group and growing it past 1,000 members.

The reason the middle ground is so awkward is 90% of a social media community is silent. Jakob Nielsen, an Internet researcher and expert in Web usability, developed the 90-9-1 Theory. He found that only 1% of an online community are active Content Creators, the rest are not. Curators make up 9% of a community. They are the people who edit and share other people's articles and videos that they think the community will value. The remaining 90%, the silent majority, are consumers. They simply consume the content and conversations in the group—they are the proverbial wallflowers.

A group functions well at eight to sixteen members, because it has enough people to create a lively conversation. At that size the group can engage each other as individuals, share different perspectives and notice when someone isn't participating. As the group grows above twenty or so members, those personal connections begin to break apart. There are too many people, and the ability to carry on a group discussion becomes very challenging, if not impossible. In a live setting the group will break into smaller groups or cliques; in an online setting the group will go silent.

The dynamics of a small group do not return until a social media group has 1,000 or more members. With 1,000 members you have 10 active participants—the active 1%. They engage with each other, and become the kernel of your community's dance. They spark conversations, respond to each other and sustain the dialogue even when you're not there.

The active 1% of the group also creates the dynamic for others to participate in the community. The remaining 99% may not be proactive members, but from time-to-time they will feel compelled to participate. A question will resonate with them, and they will respond. Or they may have a few free minutes and see an opportunity to share their wisdom and expertise. But without the dialogue and engagement of the active 1%, the silent majority won't participate. **You need 1,000 or more members to set the stage for the party to take off.**

“ *THE PARTY DOESN'T START
UNTIL YOU CROSS THE
1,000 MEMBER MARK* ”



Unfortunately there is no easy way to get to 1,000 members. In Sticky Branding's case, it took us eight months of hard work inviting one person at a time. The first group of people to join your community will come from your network. They'll be people you know, and they'll join because you ask them. They are there because they like you, trust you and want to support you.

To get your first 1,000 members start with a list of the people you know. Who are you going to invite to your party? Look at your connections on social networks to identify who you can invite to your group. Then look at your contact management system and your personal contacts to select more people to invite. Build a list and keep adding to it.

Make your invitations personal. People don't respond to chain messages or group emails. They will respond to you, and you alone. Craft a message that will appeal to your network. Personalize the note, and be specific with your request. Tell invitees what you are doing, what the group is all about, and why you want them to join.

As you exhaust your personal network, start to shift gears and consider how you can market the group to new networks. Ask your group for suggestions about whom to invite. Promote the group through your marketing programs like tradeshows, newsletters or your website. Get creative. It's hard work, but you've got to invest the effort to achieve the critical mass of the first 1,000 members.



ONE POST PER PERSON PER WEEK

The awkward phase of growing to 1,000 members is the most important stage of your group, because this is where the culture is formed.

Before you reach 1,000 members you will have a very active presence in your group. The bulk of the posts and the content will be initiated by you and your team, and you will be the ones driving the group forward. As you cross the thousand-member mark, the active 1% will start to grow beyond you. And the culture and tone developed in the early days will carry forward once your group takes off.

Growing to 1,000 members is where you get people dancing. The party is resting on you and your team's shoulders until it takes off. You've got to create the culture and set the stage for others to dance as you recruit new members.

For the first year of our group we had a corporate policy: **one post per person per week**. We had a team of five, and each of us carried our weight to create the dance. Everyone was expected to participate in the group—one post, one comment or one question. My team was expected to be present in the group, be generous and be active.

The idea was simple—*nobody likes to dance alone*. If a new member visited our group and saw nothing was happening, they'd leave. But if a new member came to the group and saw active discussions, they would be more likely to participate. They would not feel awkward asking a question, because others were already engaged. They might even see a discussion they could jump into to share their wisdom.

Create the illusion of dancing in your group by leveraging a SWAT team of five to ten people responsible for driving discussions. Get the team working together to spark conversations that will engage others to jump in. The SWAT team is your group's moderators. They're the cool girls at your dance.

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THE PARTY IS RESTING ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL IT TAKES OFF. YOU'VE GOT TO CREATE THE CULTURE AND SET THE STAGE FOR OTHERS TO DANCE AS YOU RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS.”

Ideally the SWAT team should be made up of members of your team, but if you don't have the employee resources, get creative. Build your SWAT team with friends, family, business partners or clients. Try to create a group of committed insiders that will work towards building the culture and conversations of your group.

One of the great challenges for the SWAT team is coming up with things to talk about in the group. Get your SWAT team to meet on a regular basis to brainstorm questions and discussion topics. At the same time review the ongoing discussions to see what topics are resonating and which are falling short. This is an excellent learning opportunity to see how your group is functioning, and to come up with new content and ideas to make it even more fun and productive.

For the Sticky Branding group we had weekly SWAT team meetings to brainstorm conversation topics. We'd get in front of the whiteboard and talk about questions we'd like to bring to the group. The benefit of live brainstorming sessions was they enabled our ideas to collide and new questions to arise. This was a lot more efficient than asking everyone to work in isolation and come up with their own content.

We used a Google Docs Spreadsheet to organize and collect all the articles, videos and discussions that we wanted to add to the group on a weekly basis. After our brainstorming sessions, we would add all the new ideas to the spreadsheet with posting dates. Our goal was to create at least three weeks of content at any given time so there would never be a shortage of topics for engaging the group. The swat team also had access to the spreadsheet so the team members could add to it whenever they had an idea or found something new to share. The document was essential. It was the editorial calendar of our group.

Creating a dynamic dance requires people. Your team sets the stage to get others involved. They are the hosts and the conversation starters. They are the ones that will make your group a success and help it scale beyond anything you could do on your own.

WHEN THE DANCE GETS ROLLING GET MODERATING

Getting your first 1,000 members can feel like an eternity, but the next 1,000 come remarkably quickly. It took us eight months to break 1,000 members, but the next 1,000 joined in less than thirty days. And we crossed 5,000 members sixty days after that. When your group crosses its tipping point, it really becomes a party.

The growth phase is fun, exciting and productive. All the hard work invested in growing your community through the awkward dance phase pays off as the party takes on a life of its own. People join on their own accord, they chat, they share and they engage with each other. You can even take a day off, and the party will carry on without you.

But don't step back and leave the group to its own devices. A growing group requires just as much work and energy as a new group. Stay present, stay active and stay generous. As your dance takes off your SWAT team's role changes. They move from initiating conversations to guiding and growing them. They become the ringmasters who help keep conversations on track, drawing in others' opinions and moving ideas to the forefront of the group.

The SWAT team also plays a very important moderation role. As your group grows and gains visibility you will gain more and more attention from spammers. Spam comes in many forms in social media, from the blatant to the subtle. Managing obvious spam is straightforward, because the platforms provide tools for blocking users and deleting content. The subtle spam is far more insidious.

One of the Sticky Branding group's greatest moderation challenges is managing blogger and promotional traffic. Individual members try to ride the success and size of the group by promoting their own content. It is fine to share a few blog posts or personal articles, but if this content is left unchecked it can drown out the conversations and dilute the contributions of the active 1%.

“*GETTING YOUR FIRST 1,000 MEMBERS CAN FEEL LIKE AN ETERNITY, BUT THE NEXT 1,000 COME REMARKABLY QUICKLY.*”

As your group scales develop moderation policies. Each group will experience different moderation challenges, and a one-size fits all policy does not work. In the Sticky Branding group we have a few rules:

1. **One blog post per member per week.** If members break this rule their extra posts are removed.
2. **No promotions.** Posts that invite members to webinars, events, other groups, or any other promotional requests are removed.
3. **No job postings.** We consider job postings to be promotions. Members who blatantly disregard this rule are removed from the group.

Our swat team clearly understands these rules and responds accordingly when they come across these posts. We treat the moderation process like weeding a garden. We are removing the weeds from the group so the quality conversations rise to the top. Weeding also helps to maintain the culture and tone of the community so it remains fun, engaging and productive.

The moderation process grows as your group scales. With over 20,000 members we invest thirty minutes a day, seven days a week filtering the posts in our group. It is an operational cost, and you should plan for it as your group scales.

FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP

As your group scales it is easy to get caught up in the moderation and maintenance of the community, because it is work. But the value of your community is in the relationships. This should always be your priority.

The people you connect with and get to know will become one of the greatest assets of your business. These relationships can evolve into customers, referral partners and fans. These are the people that will support you and help you grow a remarkable brand.

Relationships take time. They are based on multiple experiences and exposures to you and your brand. The more your customers interact with you, your company and your employees, the stronger the relationships you will achieve.

Use the 3 Be's to focus on relationship building in your community: Be Present, Be Opinionated and Be Generous.

Be Present. It's your community. You started it, nurtured it and grew it into something greater than yourself. Don't get lost in the crowd. To have any impact in your community you have to be active and present in the group. Use the model of one post per person per week to stay present. Make a point of initiating conversations to remain a vocal and active member of your community. Your role is to lead and demonstrate your firm's capabilities, values and insights.

Be Opinionated. Your opinions are what make you interesting. Share your company's point of view throughout your community. What does your company believe in? How do you bring value to your clients? How do you solve problems?

Participate honestly and share your thoughts. Balanced, washed out and boring content never makes an impact. Let your personality shine through your content and your interactions.

Be Generous. Help others make an impact in your community. The more people that are engaged and contributing to your group the healthier it will be. Take a proactive stance to help people get their voices heard, questions answered and profiles raised. When you serve your community it will give back to you in multiples.

Think of your investment in your community as a relationship bank. Every day you engage and connect with members of your community you are making small deposits. In time those investments add up, and you will have relationships that can convert into something greater—a client, a referral, an insight, or something else of value.



IT'S YOUR TURN

Are you ready to launch your own dance? Are you ready to lead a social media community that scales and has impact? Take the plunge, and get started today. Scaling a social media community is highly rewarding with three key benefits:

1. **Relationships.** Connect with new and interesting people.
2. **Reputation.** Grow your brand awareness and credibility.
3. **Opportunities.** Open up opportunities you wouldn't otherwise see.

A community opens so many new doors, because it's based on relationships. As you connect with new people and work together, you will naturally get to know each other. Those relationships can lead to greatness. Capitalize on them by investing in a community.

Your community already exists, but it's just not visible yet. The people are there waiting to join a dance that fits their interests and needs. All they need is a leader—a person to pick the theme, set up the room, invite a group of people, and help the group get over the awkward phase to start dancing. That is your role. Get your dance moving and create a community you will be proud of.

ABOUT JEREMY MILLER



Jeremy Miller is a brand builder, keynote speaker, and the bestselling author of [*Sticky Branding: 12.5 Principles to Stand Out, Attract Customers and Grow an Incredible Brand*](#).

For Jeremy, branding is deeply personal. After watching his family's business nearly hit rock bottom, he and his family were forced to take a long hard look at the way the company was run and at the industry as a whole.

Jeremy realized it wasn't his company's sales people or marketing processes that were failing, it was their brand. This caused him to regroup, revamp, and rebrand the business. And within a year the company turned the corner and rocketed into growth mode.

That experience inspired Jeremy to embark on a decade-long study of how companies grow recognizable, memorable brands — what he calls Sticky Brands.

Fast forward to today, Jeremy has interviewed thousands of CEOs and business owners and profiled hundreds of companies across dozens of sectors. He lives and breathes marketing, branding, and business development, and he knows what it takes to grow a Sticky Brand.

Jeremy works with companies to [develop branding and marketing strategies](#) that make them stand out and drive sales. He is a [sought after speaker](#) delivering highly entertaining and informative talks on branding and business development.

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