Design of an Online Community

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Community College Writing Center Administrators:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/CCWCA/about/

Introduction

This online community, "Community College Writing Center Administrators" (located at

https://www.facebook.com/groups/CCWCA/) is devoted to a very specific group; not just that of

Writing Center Administrators, but those in that role at Community Colleges. While there are

numerous online communities dedicated to Writing Center Administrators, there are currently

none that are targeted specifically to those at Community Colleges. This group of administrators

often face different challenges than their 4-year college or university counterparts and as such

would benefit from a community that is not meant to replace already existing ones, but to act as a

supplement for those with the unique experiences and tasks found at the two-year school level.

Design and Methodology

Wenger, White, and Smith (2012) state that by looking at preexisting technologies, there

may be solutions that already exist or that can be reconfigured to meet other needs. This is one of

many reasons that Facebook Groups was chosen as the platform for this online community. This

platform offers a wide range of options, is easy to use, easy to reach members, and it makes the

sharing of information simple. There is also the fact that a great many people are already familiar

with how it works, thereby eliminating the fear of "something new." Much like people already

check Facebook for the news or goings on around town, checking the status of this community

on a daily basis will eventually become second nature and fully integrate into their day.

The main reason for using the Facebook platform is to make it easy for members to

communicate and share ideas. Kraut and Resnick (2016), in their Design claim 4, state that

"Making it easy for users to share content from a community with their friends (e.g. via easy

email, Twitter, Facebook, and similar links) will increase the visibility of the community among

the users' friends and thereby increase the likelihood of them joining" (p. 187). As friends often

have similar interests, and many Facebook users do use it for networking purposes in connection

with their careers, this is important. If one person is a member of a group, they can then easily

share information about the group with their friends, there is a likelihood that some of them may

be interested as well and join.

In order to begin gathering members, select individuals will initially be personally invited

to join. These individuals are administrators of award-winning and respected Community

College Writing Centers. These members will be encouraged to invite others that they feel would

be important to the group. From this initial pool of members, a number of moderators will be

selected on a rotating basis. By using rotating moderators from the community, there is a feeling

of empowerment for those in the roles but there is also the perception of the community as being

more legitimate because there is not one single person in charge, but rather it is run by the

community members themselves (Kraut & Resnick, 2016). This also makes things more

democratic, giving a voice to many more people than having one single administrator rule over

the entire community.

Kraut and Resnick (2016) also recommend that procedures are put in place in order to

regulate what happens in the community. Facebook private groups allows an option that before

being accepted into the community, screening questions may be asked to help control who

becomes a part of the community as well agreeing to stated rules (Appendix A). Questions, even

simple ones such as "Why are you interested in joining this particular group?" can help

moderators make sure that the group consists of members who are interested in the topic.

Another important setting that will be utilized is that any posting by a community member must

first be approved by a moderator (Appendix B). This approach can greatly limit inappropriate

messages, off-topic posts, and trolls, thereby limiting any damage that they may cause by preemptively deleting them before they are posted.

Kraut and Resnick (2016) state that one way in which designers can build commitment in an affective commitment group is by highlighting the common characteristics of the group members. This is accomplished in the "Description" of this online community (Appendix C). Because of the niche aspect of this group, it is important for the members to feel as though this group is for them, by them. It is a place where they can feel understood.

Mack Web Solutions (n.d.) recommends tracking Key Performance Indicators (KPI) such as engaged followers, social shares, and "applause" such as "likes." The Facebook platform will allow tracking of such data and enable the moderators to see what kinds of posts receive the most attention and be able to communicate this to members. Kraut and Resnick (2016) state that, according to their research, simply asking for participation and contribution is the most effective way to engage members in contributing. This community strives to be an Insight Community, as outlined by Vision Critical (2016).

Comparison to Existing Communities

There are a number of already existing online communities, such as the Writing Center Network (WCN), the National Tutoring Association (NTA), the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), and the WCenter Listserv. The Writing Center Network, the National Tutoring Association, and the National College Learning Center Association all utilize Facebook groups as their platform, while WCenter, the community with the most members at 3,762 (Writing Center's Online Discussion Community, 2020), is an email listserv.

The online communities using Facebook groups as their platform are significantly different from the Community College Writing Center Administrators group that has been

created for this assessment. To begin, the NTA and the NCLCA communities do not have a

focus on writing centers, but on learning assistance centers as a whole. They also have a very

"top down" approach where members rarely post or interact. Rather, the moderators themselves

post information and links to articles. While this information can be useful, there is not a feeling

of community, but rather one of being handed information whether it is appropriate to what a

member may do or not.

The Writing Center Network does focus on writing centers, but the majority of

discussions center on 4-year colleges and universities. While there is a great deal of overlap with

2-year community colleges, the community college professionals often seem to be squeezed to

the margins. The WCenter listserv, while a tremendous service, also lacks focus on community

colleges. In addition, because it is sent as an email listserv, any interaction between members

suffers significant lag time. It is also extremely difficult to share links, documents, and quick

responses.

Conclusion

This online community aligns with the 13 course objectives of EDTC-816. It also strives

to align with the nine attributes to a thriving online community, as outlined by Johnson (2013):

1) Shared Value, 2) Shared Identity, 3) Vibrant Participation, 4) Community Leadership, 5)

Quality Content, 6) Expertise, 7) Culture of Trust, 8) Elegant Experience, and 9) Growth and

Responsiveness. This online community will allow for community college writing center

administrators to have a place where they can freely share information and ideas, and grow their

investment in their profession.

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Appendix A

Membership Questions

Question 1 •••

What institution are you affiliated with? (Please provide location as well)

Question 2 •••

How many degree-seeking students are enrolled at your institution? How many students does your center serve annually?

Question 3 •••

How long have you worked in community college writing centers? What is your current position?

Group Rules

Include your group rules and ask pending members to select that they agree to them. 🔵

Group Rules from the Admins

1 **Be Kind and Courteous**
We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Let's treat everyone with respect. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required.

2 **No Hate Speech or Bullying**
Make sure everyone feels safe. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed, and degrading comments about things like race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity will not be tolerated.

3 **No Promotions or Spam**
Give more than you take to this group. Self-promotion, spam and irrelevant links aren't allowed.

4 **Respect Everyone's Privacy**
Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private. What's shared in the group should stay in the group.

Appendix B

Posting Permissions   ⦿ Anyone in the group
                                    ○ Only admins

Post Approval   ☑ All group posts must be approved by an admin or a moderator.
                         If you turn off post approval, all pending posts will be approved and posted. View pending posts.

Appendix C

About This Group

Description   Edit

The Community College Writing Center Administrators Group is focused on
sharing information, offering ideas, and being a place to interact on matters
of Writing Centers at the Community College level. Members can feel free to
discuss what works, what doesn't, and ask or answer questions. Our
intention is to broaden our community beyond the physical walls of our
centers, to interact with others, and most importantly, find better ways of
assisting our students.

🔒 Private
   Only members can see who's in the group and what they post