Design for Learning
21st Century Online Teaching and Learning
Skills for Library Workers

design4learning.info

Design for Learning 4 - Community
Keeping Your Community Going
(Week 4 Lesson)

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Welcome to Week 4!

This lesson includes:

- Advance Organizer for Week 4 (video)
- Community Lifecycle (video, with challenge question)
- Community Management (video, with challenge question)
- Discussion (video)
- Reflection 1 (activity)
- Metrics and Interventions (video, with challenge questions)
- Reflection 2 (activity)
- Summing Up Week 4 (video)
- Additional Resources (list)

Advance Organizer for Week 4

Video Transcript:
“D4L Community Week 4: Advance Organizer”
https://youtu.be/GdMzpDzjvB8

Here we are in our final week for the community module.

By now you’ve had a lot to think about and practice with. I hope it has been valuable to apply these ideas to your own project – we’ll continue with that this week.

We’ll talk a bit about the typical characteristics of the later stages of the online community lifecycle. Then you’ll get to think about what community management might look like in those later stages, and you’ll learn about some ways of using analytics to measure your student engagement, as a part of your formative assessment, so that you can provide interventions as needed. Finally, you’ll use all your notes from the exercises throughout this module to revise your instructional design plan.

So, let’s get to it!
Community Lifecycle

Video Transcript:
“D4L Community Week 4: Community Lifecycle”
https://youtu.be/s2LuoPyYNE0

Hello! This is Arden Kirkland again with the first video for the last week of the D4L Community Module.

Last week I mentioned this model from Bruce Tuckman in terms of the first stage of Forming, and being proactive about anticipating any Storming. With the right strategy up front, hopefully we can avoid some of the pitfalls of those last three parts. This week we’re going to talk more about keeping a learning community going, continuing through to Norming and hopefully Performing.

If you haven’t had a chance yet to read through the case studies I shared in Week 1, please do so before the end of this final week. They are all particularly interesting in terms of the aspect of maintaining communities in the long term. Some of them have stood the test of time and others haven’t, so there’s a lot to learn there, and the people who responded there about their communities shared some interesting behind the scenes insights.

Here’s my own amalgamation again of the several different models I’ve consulted and shared with you on the Additional Resources page, with a cyclical, ongoing approach.

Part of the reason I want to share this kind of model is that as instructors we really take on the role of community manager but don’t necessarily think of ourselves in that way. Much that is written about online community management is more from a business point of view than that of education, but the models are still helpful.

So let’s just talk through some of the developmental phases identified across different lifecycle models.

Inception is the planning phase, with some of the activities we’ve discussed in previous weeks.

At the creation stage, the instructor as community manager is generating most of the content, starting almost all discussions and replying to many people as they post so they know someone is listening. This is a crucial stage for generating discussion prompts and other activities that help people develop a sense of community.
Let’s transition from creation to establishment. Millington contrasts community management at the earlier stages with the later stages as more focused on direct interaction with a smaller number of members. Remember the 1-9-90 rule? You can think of what Millington describes here as an attempt to connect with the 1% of super users and maybe even the other 9% of contributors, without worrying as much about the other 90% yet. With carefully crafted activities early on, that 10% should start to emerge, and then you need to nurture relationships with them to keep them active. Their behavior will serve as a model for others to follow. Hopefully then you’ll reach a point where they’re responding a lot more to each other, so you don’t have to, and instead you can spend your time working on more prompts for the whole group, to get even more people engaged.

Millington defines the establishment stage as the point when critical mass has been reached, with 50% or more of activity generated by community members rather than community managers, including more discussions started by members and more responses to discussions. Here it’s important to note that when he states percentages here, that’s the percentage of activity that is initiated by the community as opposed to a community manager, NOT necessarily the percentage of community members who are participating actively. Remember, the 1-9-90 rule may be persistent.

Here’s a list of the tasks Millington recommends at this stage:

- organize regular events and activities
- collect and analyze data
- resolve conflicts
- increase sense of community

In instructional situations, you may be able to require students to post as part of their grade, or a way of getting some kind of credit. Whether or not posts should be required can be a big debate in the world of elearning! Ideally you can get students engaged without a requirement, but as you explored in Week 1 of this module, there are plenty of barriers that can get in the way of participation even with the best of intentions. In my experience, requirements at least at the start can get people over the hump with their comfort level in posting, and getting to know other community members. One compromise may be to require posts in the creation phase but expect that once students have reached this establishment phase, where they’re doing most of the posting themselves, then you may not need those requirements.

On to the next stage, Maturity. Millington defines this as the point when 90% or more of content is coming from community members, and the community is recognized externally as a definitive source of information, or in our case learning, about a specific subject. This is also the stage at which activity may plateau.
So now, we see that the challenge in the maturity stage is maintaining ideal social density once the room’s not empty anymore, as it were.

Other important tasks at this stage include:

- optimize social density
- steer community direction
- optimize ratio of newcomers
- improve usability
- re-affirm goals and vision

Then some communities may reach the final stage: Mitosis. This is the point when a community may be reaching information overload, and it makes sense to break into smaller groups to keep the size of the community and the amount of content manageable.

The level where this point is reached may be different for each community. We’ve already discussed how in an instructional setting, it can be beneficial to break a class down into smaller groups for closer interaction between community members. With some communities this may not be an issue, because you may have a much smaller potential membership to begin with. But anytime that you see members getting overloaded with the number of posts to read in a single forum, etc., it may be time to facilitate mitosis.

In the next video, we’ll talk about some techniques for community management.

**Challenge yourself!**

1. Which of the following describes a situation where it's time for the "Mitosis" stage in the online community lifecycle?

   A. Students in several small groups aren't posting very often
   B. Students are becoming more comfortable post their own thoughts and questions, outside of responding to an instructor’s prompts.
   C. A class has grown in size and with a high level of participation, there are so many posts per day that students are having trouble keeping up with reading them all.
Hello again! This is Arden Kirkland with another video for week 4 of the D4L Community Module.

This topic looks ahead to course management a bit, which you’ll cover more in a later module. Community management activities help you get to the Norming and Performing stages. You need to help your community members know what to expect, from the technology, from the instructor or community manager, from other community members, and from the schedule. Once the community is established, they should have a regular routine for their participation and hopefully it has become a regular habit, so you don’t need to remind them to participate. You can provide a syllabus or a community calendar to help with this. Appropriate intervals will depend on your period of instruction and your content.

For example, for an hour of content you may want to have repetitive features every 10-20 minutes. For a month of content you you may want to have repetitive features every week.

But you also want to maintain some flexibility to jump in with a teachable moment – if there’s something in the news, etc. that is particularly relevant to your subject, or if you have a student or group of students who need more help with a particular issue.

To keep the pace of your community going, different kinds of events can help keep people engaged. Many of these suggested by Millington are already a part of the typical online course arsenal, but I’ve highlighted some that aren’t. In an online community that goes beyond a single instructional module, you may still want to be sure to keep a regular schedule of events like these.

You have to be careful of the Iceberg Effect, a concept from the Community Roundtable. Here’s the visible part, where people see you out in the community – this is the part that’s most appreciated.

But the invisible part is much larger, from planning, to trouble-shooting technology, to assessment, and much more. There is indeed a lot more work below the surface.

This invisible work on the part of an instructor can be under appreciated and not properly accounted for. It’s no wonder that the community aspect of online instruction often doesn’t
thrive simply for the lack of time for instructors to do this invisible community management. This extra work can really make the difference in the experience of your learners.

I can’t say this enough - Community Management takes TIME. If you look at the case studies in this module about different online learning communities, the story you’ll hear again and again is wishing for more time to contribute to a community and keep it going, both on the part of managers and members. The lack of time for maintaining a community often means the decline of the community. Please be realistic about your goals for the community and about setting aside enough time to achieve them.

Both these parts, above and below the water, have been summarized by Berge as falling into 4 categories: pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical. In most cases, you’ll have to handle all 4 of these roles yourself. In an ideal situation, and a larger community, you might have 4 different people handle these 4 different roles.

Remember the 1-9-90 rule I shared in Week 1 of this module, to think about how many people in an online community are following community activities but not contributing themselves? Well, it turns out that active, thoughtful, strategic community management can actually make a remarkable difference in those numbers.

A group called The Community Roundtable does a yearly survey of community managers, and in their 2013 study they found that their respondents average results moved up to 15% creators, 30% contributors, and 55% lurkers. This is getting closer to what you’d want to achieve in an online instructional setting, especially a smaller community.

But wait, it gets even better! Their top respondents were even able to get these numbers up to 26% creators, 57% contributors, and 17% lurkers. Impressive!

There are many different factors that can affect these numbers, and once you get to know your community better you’ll have a better sense of how high you can aim in terms of participation. Remember, the lurkers can still benefit greatly from online learning opportunities, so don’t discount them!

Discussion is a huge part of online community management, so we’ll cover that more in the next video.
Challenge Yourself

2. Match the online instructor activities below to different categories of the Berge model.

A. Encouraging learners to introduce themselves at the beginning.  
   1. Pedagogical

B. Providing discussion prompts that relate to the content covered in videos and lectures.  
   2. Social

C. Providing detailed instructions for students to submit assignments within the LMS.  
   3. Managerial

D. Sharing a schedule of due dates.  
   4. Technical

Discussion

Video Transcript:  
“D4L Community Week 4: Discussion”  
https://youtu.be/2Y8oKiLq9uE

Hi! This is Arden Kirkland with a video about Discussion for week 4 of the D4L Community Module.

Remember your partner activity from Week 1, in which you brainstormed some new ideas for alternative approaches to discussions online? This week I’m going to give you some activities to work on integrating your ideas into your project.

Once you get the discussion started, how will you keep it going, wherever it is? if you’re face to face, how do you keep the discussion going? how do you prepare in advance, how do you deal with it in the moment? What do you do when people aren’t speaking up? We just have to figure out how to translate that to each different social media platform. That will depend on whether it’s synchronous or asynchronous, public or private, and what kind of motivation your students have. Do they care about the discussion for its own sake, or do they need to be lured in with the promise or threat of a grade?
Think about all the different kinds of posts you might want to share as you reach for your learning objectives. There’s a page in your workbook for you to check off all that could apply, and think about how they would be related to your instruction, or how you might just share them for fun, as a way of letting your community get to know you better, or getting to know them. Which of them should be public, or not?

Then your next exercise is going to be to work on a schedule for discussion prompts. I’m showing a sample here, of possible posts for this very class. Think of this schedule as a kind of lesson plan for how your posts will unfold. In most use cases you want your posts to be as open-ended as possible, as the beginning of a dialogue, not a monologue that people are just listening to. That said, these will be only one part of the conversation. This is your planning to start the discussion, but in most cases you’ll want to participate with more “ad hoc” posts as the discussion unfolds, responding to other people’s comments or questions.

On many platforms, this will be very similar to the discussions on our Moodle forum. There are columns for media and links - with the more visual tools, like Instagram and Pinterest, you’ll need to think about what photos you can take or what visual resources you can share as a visual discussion prompt, and what captions or comments can help get the discussion going, using the comments section and hashtags. Visuals can really help to get peoples’ attention, so you may even want to think about what visual resources you can link to from other kinds of posts, even in a forum, for example. You’ll use the list from the last slide as a guide to help you fill this in with a variety of content to get students’ attention.

You may also want to try to draft some posts to try to recruit learners. Think about their motivation to join your learning community and where and how you’re most likely to reach them.
If you like, you can test some of these out when you’re interacting with your partner this week. You may even want to try out role-playing some of the alternative discussion techniques you brainstormed last week!

Along with length of posts, for different social media platforms you need to be aware of expectations for frequency of posts on each. It can vary wildly depending on the platform you’ve chosen.

For my sample, I chose Twitter, and I scheduled at least 2 posts a day, based on the “beginner” level shown in this chart. This is a good guide to different levels of commitment, depending on your learning objectives (and of course, your availability to keep up with all of this). These are mostly for asynchronous discussions – putting out a post and getting responses gradually over a few days or a week.
In some cases you may want to use a synchronous platform – or at least one that you can use in a synchronous way. For example, you might schedule a real time class discussion in a Google Hangout, or in Second Life, or as a Twitter chat. In that case, your frequency might be asking a new question of the group every ten minutes or so, whatever is appropriate to your discussion. You still might have resources that you want to share or link to at different points in that discussion, so you could indicate that in your schedule.

Now let’s return to our donut examples! As you’re drafting your discussion prompts for a couple of different platforms, you’ll also need to think about the differences in tone.

**Reflection**

Visit your workbook, and fill out the table to indicate which types of posts may be appropriate for your project.

Then, list at least 3 different social media platforms you’ve observed, that you might use for your project.

For each one, make brief notes (in another table) about whether that platform is appropriate, based on what you entered in previous reflections, and what you’ve learned so far about that platform.

Then, in one more table, draft at least 10 posts to prompt discussion and social interaction for your instruction. These can follow whatever frequency, using whatever platform, you think will be most appropriate for your instruction, intended to be either synchronous or asynchronous.

**Metrics and interventions**

**Video Transcript:**
“D4L Community Week 4: Metrics and Interventions”

Hello there! This is Arden Kirkland with our last presentation for week 4 of the D4L Community Module, about Metrics and Interventions as a part of formative assessment.

To think about formative assessment, I wanted to share some useful terms from Avinash Kaushik, the analytics evangelist for Google. These describe the kind of engagement you’re seeking, and how to count it:
• conversation = comments or replies per post
• amplification = re-shares per post
• applause = favorites per post

In a graded situation, you may want to require a certain amount of each kind of post from each student in response to community prompts, or you may reward students whose original posts get more of all of the above. Or you may just want to count some of this for yourself to gauge if your discussion prompts, etc. are being very effective, and if your students are understanding the material well enough to further the conversation.

Think of the kind of interactions you’ll want to count related to your SMART objectives. In general, think of counting views as passive and counting posts of different kinds as active. In most platforms you’ll be able to measure both kinds of activity – for example, I can do that in our Moodle, so that even if you’re not participating in the forum, I can see if you’re looking at the various content, and for how long, etc.

Depending on your objectives, you may want to look at a simple number of posts or views, or their frequency, or duration. Those are easy to measure in most systems. What’s harder to measure is quality of interactions – you need to determine your own criteria for that. Some community managers measure conversation threads as a factor of quality – if there’s a back and forth between members, with more people engaging with the same discussion topic and responding to each other, that’s usually a good sign for your community.

You may want to set up a rubric for students to understand better what you’re looking for in a high quality discussion post. I’ve shared some samples of these in the Additional Resources for this week, to supplement what you learned about rubrics in the Foundation module.

Once you’ve figured out the kind of things you want to be counting, make sure you set up a system from the beginning to be able to track that interaction (or lack thereof).
• when do members start/stop being active?
• when do members start/stop viewing other content passively?
• what patterns emerge?
• what hurdles can you eliminate or improve?

You may also want to directly survey your learners at some point, including some questions about their interactions with the community. This slide and the next share some questions from surveys related to models we discussed in week 1. Here are some questions excerpted from the survey instrument for the Community of Inquiry model developed by Garrison et al.
These are some questions excerpted from the Sense of Community Index, the survey instrument for the Sense of Community model. You want to aim from the beginning for positive answers to these surveys, so take a look at them and think about what activities can help with your sense of community.

But beware some of the pitfalls of assessment:

First, make sure you don’t only listen to the most vocal participants. Have systems in place to try to get input from everyone, perhaps anonymously. It may help to offer some kind of reward for feedback.

Also, make sure you’re looking at the right data! The wrong data can send you in the wrong direction. Make sure your SMART objectives guide what you’re measuring and why. Here’s a good example from Moodle: if I set the automatic activity completion based on viewing a page, the system can check off activities even if someone has only visited a page for a second. On the other hand, user completion requires an honor system. That’s why for D4L we’re basing participation for credit on your interaction with quiz questions through each lesson and your forum posts.

Similarly, when you all read forum posts in email digests, that means I can’t see real metrics of who has viewed posts in Moodle. I may see a low number of views in Moodle, but people really have read the post through email.

You need to think about the particular features of your instructional module to think how community will fit in.

Will instruction be short term or long?
You’ll need to plan your formative/summative assessment accordingly
Will instruction be repeated for different groups over time? Then you have the opportunity to improve as you go.
Will the community endure after the class ends?
If so, what features will change?
You may have the potential to combine different sections over time.

Millington lists these activities as some early interventions to keep your initial contributors active and encourage others to join in. You may want to choose a few of these as activities for your online learning community in its early days.

Then, once you’ve gotten to that performing stage, how do you stay there? Here’s where your plans for assessment come in. You need a plan to continually assess your strategy, goals, systems for assessment, and reward systems, and revise them as needed for continued improvement and growth.
What interventions may be needed to keep the discussion fresh? Think about differentiated instruction – try a variety of formats to keep diverse community members engaged – audio, video, visual, hands-on, discussion. Also, keep it as simple as possible, and be sure to reward their participation in whatever form it takes, so they grow more comfortable using the platform you’ve provided.

**Reflection**

Plans for Assessment: What metrics will you need to collect on the specific social media platforms you plan to use, to know if you are meeting your SMART objectives (revisit your SMART objectives from earlier in this chapter if you need to)?

There's a table in your workbook to help you plan for this.

Then you can think about:

How frequently will you check these metrics?

How frequently will you adjust your instruction based on the metrics?

What interventions can you implement if you’re not meeting your SMART objectives for these metrics?

**Summing up Week 4**

**Video Transcript:**
“D4L Community Week 4: Summing Up”

That’s it for my presentations for this module. To finish up, take a look at one last page of additional resources, and then you can end this lesson.

Then you’ll move on to Assignment 4 to revise your instructional design plan and share your changes with others by way of the discussion forum. There are more instructions to help with that on the page for that assignment.
I just want to revisit this slide before I send you off to work on revising your instructional design plans. This graphic may help you to decide where to plug different parts from your work over this past month into your plan, but that’s really up to you to decide where it all fits.

Then you’ll be done with the Community Module, but I hope your presence in our online learning community for D4L will last much longer! Even after you’ve finished with the modules, our general discussion forum in the Orientation Module will remain as our main place to keep in touch with each other. I hope that if you haven’t already, you’ll consider being more active in that forum, to share resources as you find them, ask questions when you’re struggling with something, and share work you’re proud of. I personally feel very lucky to be a part of this community and I’m constantly learning from all of you! So, instead of saying goodbye, I’ll say that I’ll “see” you soon online!

**Additional Resources**

For this week's instruction, you may find the following resources helpful.

**Reading**


**References**

Here are citations to sources mentioned in this module:


**Visuals**

Here are citations to visual resources mentioned in this module:


**Videos:**
All of this week's videos are available on a playlist at YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLw6HBD7UyT3nq5FwezE3G0lH74tbnm_b-e

**Answer Key:**

1. C - this is a situation where breaking the large group down into a couple of smaller sub-groups would make it easier for students to keep up with a more limited discussion.
2. A-2, B-1, C-4, D-3