

## VISION CRITICAL PODCAST

### VISION CRITICAL PODCAST: AROUND THE BLOCK

#### What is a community and how do I use it as a research tool?

**Caroline**

Today we're going around the block with Ellie Sykes, VP of Online Communities. My name is Caroline Hickton, and today we're going to talk to Ellie about what is an online community, and how to use it as a research tool. Hi Ellie

**Ellie**

Hi, how are you today?

**Caroline**

Very well, how are you?

**Ellie**

Great thanks.

**Caroline**

Thank you for taking the time to come and speak on this podcast. We're very excited to have you talk about communities. So, first maybe we could start with what is an online community, how do you define it,

**Ellie**

An online community is really about building relationships with a group of people that already have something in common with one another. So they might have similar passions, like they really love to cook, or they're really passionate about hockey, really fanatical about hockey. Or they're moms and they have 3 kids at home and they want to talk about the challenges that they're having with their kids. So, it's really about bringing a group of those people together and engaging with them and building a relationship with them so that you can really gather deep insights and inspirations. And when you're building a relationship with somebody it's really about

## VISION CRITICAL PODCAST

fostering an environment of trust and respect so that the people feel very comfortable and willing to share and collaborate that with you, because as a business, as a client, you're going to be asking some tricky and challenging questions and you need to be able to share with them on a very deep level in order for them to share back with you on a deep level.

### **Caroline**

There are lots of communities out there online, what is the benefit of using some of our tools for an online community?

### **Ellie**

Our tools have 3 key benefits. The first one is flexibility. You can interact with the people using a variety of different methodologies. So it's not just about talking to them in a qualitative way like in a discussion form for example. We can do that and you get really deep insights and you really dig into the whys of the stuff, the things that you're trying to get out of the people. But, we can also interact with them through quantitative surveys. We also have fantastic fusion rich media which you can check out at other parts of the website. And if you work with our sister company Angus Reid Strategies, you'll get really deep insights and inspirations delivered back to you because they're a full service research company.

The last point I wanted to make, the third point is that there's really a seamless transition in the engagement in our online communities between the qualitative exercises and the quantitative tasks that you want people to do. Regardless of whether they're doing a survey or whether they're participating in a discussion forum, they still feel like they're part of the community. They still feel like they're being engaged with and they still feel like they're a part of an intimate community because of the way that we customize and deliver for them. That sounds great, and what are the benefits to the client of establishing an online community or panel over regular research methodologies?

Really, it's about access. That is the key benefit. In today's world, it is very challenging to reach out to your customer. In a lot of cases you have a group of people that are challenging to find. Maybe a very, very niche target. You can't just pick up the phone and call them anymore, they're not at home, they don't have a land line anymore, they don't want to be contacted that way. Access panels are starting to decline as well, so really it's about building something that you can interact in an environment with these people at a very deep level, and they're having a relationship with you, and only you, in that environment. And in that way you can

## VISION CRITICAL PODCAST

just get so much more deep in terms of relationships in terms of collaboration with these people. And they really feel more engaged in the process as well and can become even more of a grand ambassador for you and your company.

**Caroline**

That sounds great, I think there's a lot of discussion about communities but you've really very clearly outlined some of the key things to think about. Thanks so much Ellie.

**Ellie**

You're welcome.

**Caroline**

Just before we go can you tell us a quick story about a brush with greatness that you've experienced.

**Ellie**

Sure, I was in the Toronto airport waiting for a flight and I was walking around. There was this guy in front of me and I thought I recognized him so I tried to get the side view and it turned out that it was Curtis from take home chef. He was on his cell phone so I wanted to just go up and say hi and tell him that I love his show and plus I wanted to talk to him. He was on his cell phone, then he had a beer, and then still on his cell phone. I'm thinking, I'm not going to get a chance to meet this guy. I was getting on the plane and it turned out he was on the same plane as me but he was still on the cell phone and he was sleeping the whole flight. And then I get to Vancouver and my boyfriend was meeting me at the airport and he and I were waiting for my bags, and Curtis was standing right beside us so I went over and talked to him, sch a nice guy. He was in Canada promoting his new book. But his show is fantastic and very interesting.

**Caroline**

Very exciting brush with greatness.

**Ellie**

Very exciting.

**VISION CRITICAL PODCAST**

**Caroline**

So is he as good looking in person as he is on TV?

**Ellie**

Yeah he's more good looking in person.

**Caroline**

Nice, thanks Ellie. So if any listeners have any comments or questions our email is [podcast@visioncritical.com](mailto:podcast@visioncritical.com). Thanks so much for listening, and I'm Caroline Hickton. See you next time.